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THE IDLE BORN

A COMEDY OF MANNERS

By H. C. Chatfield-Taylor, in collaboration with
Reginald de Koven

PART I

ONE EVENING

I

They are so linked in friendship.

—*Henry VI.*

DOUBLE drawing-rooms, with stiff-backed chairs and damask curtains, were not to Dickie Willing's taste. They might be the natural concomitants of Washington Square and a Dutch ancestry, but in his opinion they were decidedly out of date.

"If there's a dinner on, we'll wait," he said, glancing about the room with a bored air.

"There's only Mr. Schuyler's nephew, sir, and Mr. Wendell," answered the imperturbable servant who had shown him in.

"Then say that Herr von Bulowitz and Mr. Willing are here," Dickie continued, indifferently.

"Very good, sir," and the man vanished, just as a little red-faced German, with the proportions of a peg-top, stumbled over the door-sill, almost dropping a violin case he bore tenderly in his arms. He had little pig-like eyes and his hair was gray and fluffy, like the wool of a Peruvian llama. This hair was the *maestro's* stock-in-trade. It was that people came to see. Incidentally, he played the violin.

Herr von Bulowitz shivered. "The climate is like the New York woman," he muttered, "beautiful, but damn cold."

"Therein it resembles your audiences," answered Dickie, laconically. Then his eye met the portrait of a fat-faced burgher of New Amsterdam hanging over the mantelpiece. He

wondered whether the painting was real or merely the imagery of the special vintage he had drunk for dinner.

"Sir, I am the great Von Bulowitz," said the little German, drawing himself up proudly. "The big public, they adore me; but society—bah!"

"See here," interrupted Willing, "I've got you a cool five hundred for to-night; so the less you kick about it the better. You may think it's your playing people want. Don't fool yourself; it's your hair."

"Gott im Himmel, so! I vill not play," exclaimed Von Bulowitz, the color of his face changing from carnelian to carmine.

"Oh, yes, you will," answered Dickie, dryly; "you wouldn't let that five hundred get away."

For a moment the little Teuton paced the floor excitedly, muttering German oaths; then he subsided into an arm-chair and hugged his violin. Meanwhile, Dickie Willing gazed at his own reflection in the pier-glass. There was, however, little reason for his self-appreciation beyond the fit of his clothes and the smoothness with which his hair was brushed. Dickie lived by his wits, and lived well. Once he had had some money. That he lost it is not surprising, but that he managed to make himself indispensable to society as a purveyor of entertainments, without losing caste, proved that he had that rare tact which creates popularity for its possessor. When a hostess wished a novelty, were it cotillion favors or virtuosi, she went to Dickie, and Dickie was always ready to oblige her—at so much per idea.

Dickie, having adjusted his tie to his satisfaction, turned away from the glass with an air of self-contentment.

Then the dining-room doors were opened and Nicholas Schuyler entered the room. How rare his kind to-day!—a man of breeding, born to wear “the grand old name of gentleman,” in quiet contrast to the vulgarity of modern life. Even Dickie realized the distinction that marked the bearing of this gray-haired representative of the old school.

“Pardon me, gentlemen, if I have kept you waiting,” Mr. Schuyler said, softly.

The little German jumped to his feet and bowed with exaggerated gesture.

“Sir, I am the great Von Bulowitz. I come so quick because, unless I fix myself just so, I cannot play. I am so sensitive as my violin.”

“You honor me, sir, by playing in my house,” answered the host, courteously. The great Von Bulowitz placed his hand to his heart and bowed again.

Two younger men had followed Nicholas Schuyler from the dining-room. One was Schuyler Ainslee, his nephew, a frank, careless young man of twenty-five or more, who had drifted through the world, accepting the good things of life as his due and overcoming the disagreeable by the exuberance of youthful spirits. The other was Norman Wendell, his most intimate friend—a young painter, in whose pale, delicate face was an expression of earnestness, a desire to conquer in the struggle with the world. The two were friends because of their opposite natures, that were like positive and negative currents.

Dickie Willing did not notice the newcomers, but, drawing Mr. Schuyler aside, he whispered, confidentially:

“Awful cranks, these musical Johnnies. Had a devil of a time getting him here. Deserve some credit, what?”

“Take cash, Dickie. Nobody’d give you credit,” laughed young Ainslee at his elbow.

“But don’t take it all,” put in Wen-

dell. “Leave some for Von Bulowitz.”

“I say, fellows, don’t chaff,” protested Dickie. “Can’t starve; got to work, you know.”

“That’s right, Dickie, work everybody you can,” continued Ainslee, and he and Wendell smiled broadly at Dickie’s discomfiture.

Mr. Schuyler gave his nephew a glance of disapproval, and, turning to the musician, said, quietly, “I thought the back drawing-room would be the best place for the music. You see, there’ll only be a very few people.”

“Vat! only a few peoples to hear me play?” protested the little German.

“Me, the great Von Bulowitz!”

“You don’t understand,” said Dickie, hurriedly. “A few people are so much smarter.”

“Yes,” laughed Ainslee. “You see, the way to keep your social position in New York is to give a party and leave out half the people you know. Those who are there think they are society; those who are not immediately invite you, to prove they are not outsiders.”

“Tut, tut, my boy,” protested his uncle. “My house is small, but I’m old-fashioned. I hold to the old ways. Give me New York as it was.”

“And give me New York as it is, with all its glitter and bigness,” exclaimed the nephew. “Give me the millionaires, too, with their vulgar wealth—they know how to spend it; give me the women—heartless, if you like—they know how to make themselves attractive. I am modern to my finger tips, and proud of it.”

“What heresy!” exclaimed Mr. Schuyler, in disgust. “It’s enough to make your ancestors turn in their graves.”

“Yes? Well, it won’t hurt them to move a little,” replied young Ainslee, glancing patronizingly at the portraits on the walls.

“Come, Herr von Bulowitz,” said Nicholas Schuyler, turning away. “My nephew is incorrigible. It’s the Ainslee blood. His father wasn’t one of us.”

The German shrugged his shoul-

ders, because he did not understand, and the old Knickerbocker, glancing at Wendell in despair as he walked away, said, pleadingly, "Why don't you persuade Schuyler to marry? That would be his salvation."

"Ainslee married!" chuckled Dickie Willing. "Ha! Rather neat, what?" But, as nobody seemed to notice him, he meekly followed Mr. Schuyler and the musician to the other room.

The two friends were left alone.

Wendell looked at his companion searchingly. Ainslee had a manly face, with clear blue eyes and high cheek bones. His mouth was straight and determined. Wendell could not reconcile it with the carelessness of the man.

"Schuyler," he said, suddenly, "why do you throw your life away?"

Ainslee laughed. "What else is it good for?" he said.

"I wish I had half your chance," sighed Wendell.

"Humph!" grunted the other. "Suppose I should do something. In politics, I'd be a plutocrat; in literature, a dilettante, with more money than brains; in business, one more lamb to be fleeced. The world would never take me seriously."

"It will take you just as seriously as you take yourself," protested Wendell.

Ainslee glanced at his friend. "See here, old man," he said, after a moment, "because you paint bad pictures to sell to your friends, does it give you the right to get up on a pedestal and preach?"

"I'm not preaching—I'm only advising you to go slow." Wendell said this quietly, without attempting to resent his companion's imputations.

"Oh, I know," answered Ainslee. "The pace that kills, and all that drivell. Well, what of it? I take the world as it comes, and a jolly good world I find it."

"And meanwhile Renée Dressler makes a fool of you."

"If she didn't, some other woman would."

"When inclination has made a fool, remorse will produce a cynic—which

is only another name for a fool," said Wendell, dryly.

"Well, suppose I do play with Renée Dressler—is that any of your affair?" retorted Ainslee, rather angrily.

"Yes, when I'm expected to play gooseberry."

Ainslee poked the fire. "Can't you paint the lady's portrait unless she sits to you alone?" he answered, sneeringly. "Besides, the studio's half mine, anyway."

Wendell laughed. "Come, Schuyler," he replied, "do you think I can't see through your little game?"

Ainslee put down the poker and looked at his friend. "You fatigue me," he said. "Renée Dressler's no gosling—she can take care of herself."

"And you, too, for that matter, but——"

"Oh, there's a but, is there? Well, out with it."

Wendell paced the floor thoughtfully, then turning suddenly he said, earnestly:

"Well, to be frank, I can't stand by quietly and see you treat Margaret Irvington as you do."

Ainslee laughed. "So that's where the shoe pinches," he said.

"Yes; it's a confounded shame," continued Wendell. "You have no right to let any girl think you're serious."

"What if I am?"

"You serious!" exclaimed Wendell, "when you're in love with Renée Dressler!"

Ainslee looked at him long and searchingly. "What if I were not?" he said, slowly. "What if I intend to marry Margaret Irvington—provided, of course, she'll have me; what then?"

"Well, God help her, that's all," said his companion.

"A nice sort of a friend you are!" exclaimed Ainslee, with a gesture of resentment.

"I'm too good a friend not to wish to spare you both inevitable misery."

For a moment Schuyler Ainslee gazed into the fire thoughtfully.

"She—she's different from other

women," he said, finally. "She might make a man of me."

"Well, I'm the last man to judge you," replied the other, in a tone of despair.

Ainslee walked toward his friend quickly. "Norman, old chap," he said, placing his hand on his shoulder and looking into his face searchingly, "I never thought of it before, but I believe you love Margaret yourself."

Wendell turned away. "Well, what if I do?" he said, shrugging his shoulders, resignedly.

"Have you told her?" Ainslee asked, after a moment's reflection.

"How could I? What has a poor devil like me to offer?"

"Then tell her. I've said nothing yet."

"Do—do you mean it?" Wendell exclaimed.

"Of course I mean it. Can I stand in the way of a man like you? No. Go to her—tell her the truth. You—you—owe it to yourself, and to her."

Ainslee lighted a cigarette by way of disguising his feelings.

"And if I fail?" asked Wendell, slowly.

"Then it's my turn," said his friend, tossing the match into the fire. "If I didn't mean it, I'd say it was fair game."

"And if I succeed?" Wendell asked.

"Oh, I'll worry along," laughed Ainslee. "I won't die of the devils. I'm not that sort."

There was a moment of silence. Wendell paced the floor, counting mechanically the squares in the rug. Suddenly he stopped. "And if I lose, what then? What of the other woman?" he asked, anxiously.

"There won't be any," Ainslee replied, calmly sending a puff of blue smoke toward the ceiling. "Whatever happens, I'm going to quit right now." Then, with a laugh, he continued: "I'm going to pull down my French lithographs and hang up Madonnas."

"Are you serious?" his friend asked, in a tone of incredulity.

"Yes, perfectly—there's my hand on it."

The two men shook hands quietly as men do when they accept a wager, or part on the eve of a battle.

"Then let the best man win," said Wendell after a moment's deliberation.

"It'll be you, old chap—I don't deserve her," answered his friend, cheerfully. Then he walked toward the fire and threw away his cigarette.

Nicholas Schuyler came into the room. He had left Von Bulowitz and Willing quarreling over the proper arrangement of the chairs.

"Well," he said to Wendell, "have you convinced Schuyler that life's not all beer and skittles?"

"No," said Wendell, sadly. "Schuyler has convinced me that appearances are sometimes deceptive." Then he wandered into the smoking-room. There are moments when a man wishes to be alone.

II

An enemy of craft and vantage.

—Henry V.

MR. AND MRS. MONTGOMERY DRESSLER, familiarly known as "the Monties," were the first of Nicholas Schuyler's guests to materialize. They had been yawning by their own fireside for an hour or more in order that they might convey the impression of having dined out, but unfortunately miscalculating the distance from Fifty-fourth street to Washington Square by some fifteen minutes, they were mortified to find themselves the first arrivals.

"My dear lady," said the host, advancing to meet them, "it is so good of you to come early."

"Oh, it wasn't I," laughed Mrs. Dressler, "it was Monty, silly man. He said we'd never get here."

"Well, you can't blame me," said her offending husband, suppressing a yawn. "Washington Square! Why, it's as far out of the world as the Bowery. Why don't you move up town, Schuyler?"

"What!" gasped the courtly Knickerbocker. "Leave Washington Square—the last stand of the 'old guard'—"

against Central Park and the millionaires! Never, sir, never!"

Fortunately the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Van Rensselaer Bleeker saved the situation, else Mr. Schuyler's indignation might have exceeded the bounds of politeness. As it was, he turned away from the young stockbroker abruptly, and with a very red face.

Monty Dressler winked at his wife. "Peppery old cock," he laughed. Mrs. Dressler did not reply. She was angry because Schuyler Ainslee had failed to see her. He was still gazing into the fire, lost in contemplation of the immediate future.

"Well, upon my word," she said to herself, "if he thinks he can treat me like that!"

Renée Dressler was a woman in whom sentiment was sterilized. She looked upon love much as a game of confidence into which men were to be deliberately decoyed by a few apparently successful wins, and then mercilessly robbed of their affections by the most subtle methods of scientific play. Her beauty was of a fleshly type, made stunning by wavy folds of Titian hair, and by deep brown eyes, that had a dreamy, mystical way of looking into men's souls; but her mouth was cold and hard—and a woman's mouth means everything. Men called her figure "divine," but as it was suggestive of most that is earthly, the heavenly attribute seemed ill-chosen. She was, nevertheless, a strikingly beautiful creature, perfectly groomed, and perfectly confident of her power to fascinate mankind.

As for "Monty" Dressler, people endured him because of his wife, and she endured him because of his complaisance. He had the single advantage of being well born, if one can disassociate birth from breeding.

Mrs. Dressler took up a few photographs from the table and examined them abstractedly, meanwhile casting an occasional side glance in the direction of Schuyler Ainslee. Monty approached her quietly.

"There's Ainslee," he whispered. "He wants security for that loan,

and I can't give it. Watch your chance and talk him over."

Even Renée Dressler was shocked at such brutal candor. "I've half a mind to tell him you never intend to pay," she answered, coldly.

"Well, I like that," sneered Monty. "Suppose I should play the injured husband?"

"At least I should be rid of you."

"Hush!" he whispered, "he's looking." Then he stole away quickly, while his wife arranged a bow of ribbons on her gown with apparent unconsciousness of Ainslee's approach.

Schuyler came toward her leisurely. He had awakened from his reverie, but his lack of eagerness to greet her annoyed her exceedingly.

"I wondered if you were going to speak to me," she said, resentfully, as he extended his hand.

"You may be surprised," he laughed, "but I was actually thinking."

"About me?"

"No, about matrimony."

"How very immoral!" she laughed, hiding her face behind her fan. Then they were interrupted by the arrival of the aggressive Mrs. Jones-Smythe and her simpering daughter, Mabel. Mrs. Jones-Smythe's voice was a bar to conversation in her immediate vicinity, so Schuyler and his companion sought refuge in a far-off corner.

"So good of you to come," said Mr. Schuyler, as he greeted the newcomers.

"And so good of you to ask us," answered Mrs. Jones-Smythe, with an *empressement* of manner that would have done honor to the cook of a Grand Duchess. "Mabel adores music, don't you, dear?"

"Yes, mamma," replied the daughter, with a kittenish smile.

"You know Mabel plays Chopin charmingly," pursued the mother, much to the annoyance of her host, who had invited her only because the late Mr. Jones-Smythe had been his room-mate at college. "It will be such a treat for the dear child," she continued. "We gave up a dinner at

Mrs. Egerton's so that she should not miss this lovely music."

"Mrs. Egerton's," grunted Monty Dressler to himself. "It's odds on she was never in the house. Wonder how she got here?"

At this moment the curtains separating the drawing-rooms were thrown back, disclosing the great Von Bulowitz in theatric pose.

Mrs. Jones-Smythe gasped with delight. "Oh, Mr. Dressler, do tell me," she said to the unfortunate Monty, who had not had time to escape, "is that Herr von Bulowitz?"

"Yes, that's his nibs, all right; Zulu hair and all."

Her red face assumed an expression of horror. "How can you be so disrespectful to art?" she protested.

"Because I bar a chap who won't get his hair cut."

"To me he is divine," she answered, so loudly that she might have been heard in Eighth street. Then, turning to her host, she continued: "Do introduce me to the *maestro*."

"With pleasure," murmured Mr. Schuyler, though the truth of his remark was questionable. So Mrs. Jones-Smythe swept proudly toward the great Von Bulowitz, her dress crackling at every step, and her daughter Mabel fluttering in her wake.

Meanwhile, Ainslee had been telling Renée Dressler, in a blunt, straightforward way, that he was weary of the life he had been leading, and could see nothing but misery if the false relationship they had established should continue. He was ashamed of the part he had played, but so far it had been only a flirtation—thanks to her cleverness—with nothing serious to regret. He was too sincere not to explain the case frankly, and she was too confident of her own power to consider the situation dangerous. Men were always cautious when they were afraid—and to be afraid of her meant an unconditional surrender in the end, if the cards were properly played.

"So you're contemplating matrimony?" she said, with a cynical smile.

"Why not?" he answered.

"Humph! That's the way a stupid man always ends an affair. He marries some little minx to pet him and darn his stockings, and flatters himself he's virtuous—until he falls in love again."

Those deep, mysterious eyes forced a confession, even against his will. "Men love women like you in spite of themselves," he said, his voice trembling as he spoke.

"Until we're foolish enough to care," she laughed. "A man in love is like the baby in the advertisement—he won't be happy till he gets it."

"If I thought you had ever cared for—"

"Of course," she answered, sarcastically, "a woman never cares; it's only men who are brave and self-sacrificing—only men who love."

Ainslee smiled. "Then you won't find it difficult to forget?"

"That will be the easiest part of it."

"Well, we've played the game," he sighed.

"And it wasn't worth the candle."

"Yes. If you weren't an American we'd have eloped long ago."

"I fail to see the point," she said, with a show of interest.

"For once you are dense. In Europe women have hearts; in America merely intellects."

She shrugged her pretty shoulders unconcernedly. "Well?" she said.

"I gave you the chance," he replied. "You remember my letter."

"I'm not a fool."

"The game is give and take—not solitaire."

"Patience is the game a man should play."

"Indeed!" he answered, coldly. "For me it must be all or nothing."

"Then marry your little minx," she said, with a gesture of indifference.

"Precisely what I intend to do," he replied, plunging his hands into his pockets and settling himself comfortably in his chair, as if a great weight had been lifted from his mind.

Renée glared at him angrily. "If you dare!" she said.

"Is that a challenge?" he asked, looking up at the ceiling with a forced endeavor to appear unconcerned. He was afraid to meet her eyes again, for fear of wavering.

"Yes, it is a challenge," she said, rising from her seat and carefully arranging the folds of her gown. "Go, if you wish—you'll be back in a week."

"Never," he cried.

"How absurd you are," she murmured. "Melodrama always did bore me."

She hummed a few bars of a popular song, while Ainslee glared at a spot on the rug.

"My fan, if you please," she said, finally, with a gesture toward the table. He handed her the fan. She took it carelessly and tapped her fingers with the mother-of-pearl handle.

"Schuyler," she said, suddenly.

"Yes."

"Women are curious creatures—we don't forget as easily as men do, and—and we usually get even in the end."

"Well?" he asked.

"Remember it, that's all," she purred. Then she walked toward the other drawing-room, where Von Bulowitz was tuning his violin amid the clatter of many voices. Ainslee plunged his hands into his pockets again and set his teeth. Then he sighed and took a step toward the fire. "It's over," he thought, "for better or for worse."

Nicholas Schuyler, seeing Mrs. Dressler was alone, came toward her and offered his arm. "Permit me, my dear lady," he said, with old-time courtesy. Noticing his nephew, he continued, sharply, "Schuyler, where are your manners?"

"Gone to the devil with my morals," answered the young man, gruffly.

"Poor boy, don't disturb him," interrupted Mrs. Dressler, pityingly; "he's contemplating matrimony."

Ainslee slammed the door of the smoking-room in a way that was expressive of his feelings.

"Why," exclaimed his uncle, in surprise, "I thought Schuyler was in love with you."

"With me?" she laughed. Oh, dear, no; he's in love with himself."

III

We are the Queen's subjects, and must obey.

—Richard III.

A WELL-TRAINED servant has a way of accentuating the importance of a guest by the precision with which the name is announced, therefore it was with particular emphasis that Mr. Schuyler's butler heralded the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Ferry Dobbs and Mr. Beacher.

"Ah," exclaimed the host, as he and Mrs. Dressler turned instinctively at the sound of the exalted names, "the queen of diamonds."

"Escorted, as usual, by the knave of hearts and the deuce of spades," said his companion *sotto voce*, as a blaze of feminine magnificence swept into the room, followed by the exquisite warden of her fan and scent-bottle and the humble bearer of her family burdens. The air of superiority assumed by Mrs. Ferry Dobbs, on this and all occasions, was worthy of an empress; but an empress can afford to be modest and gracious because she is sure of her position. Not so with a queen of society in the borough of Manhattan; her motto is malice toward all, condescension to none. Some day the little world between Gramercy and Central Parks and thereabouts may discover that it is the heart and not the wardrobe that makes a woman, but meanwhile Mrs. Ferry Dobbs and her diamonds reign supreme, and the mammonites bow before their queen. Even the courtly Nicholas Schuyler beamed in the golden effulgence of her presence, and felt flattered in his inmost heart at this honor to his modest party.

"My dear Mrs. Dobbs," he said, with unfeigned eagerness, "I was so afraid you were not coming."

"Oh, really!" the queen replied, with a gesture toward the faithful Beacher. A jeweled scent-bottle was forthcoming, which she sniffed disdainfully.

"Yes," continued Mr. Schuyler; "you know a party without you is like—is like—" and then he was lost for a simile.

Mrs. Dressler saw her opportunity. "A party without you, Mrs. Dobbs," she interrupted, suavely, "is like a watch without a mainspring—it won't go."

"Oh, really!" and Mrs. Dobbs actually smiled.

"Fancy a party without Mrs. Dobbs!" said Bertie Beacher, as he exchanged the royal smelling-bottle for the royal fan.

"Perhaps, Mr. Beacher, when you have time," suggested the host, "you will condescend to speak to me."

"Why, Schuyler, you there?" drawled Beacher. "Really, I didn't see you."

"Of course not; the host is the last person one notices nowadays."

This was too subtle for the intellect of Bertie Beacher. He had semi-annual importations of clothes from "the other side" and the preference of Mrs. Ferry Dobbs, and naturally mankind was envious; so Nicholas Schuyler's sarcasm was accepted as a flattering demonstration of jealousy. However, Dickie Willing's arrival on the scene prevented further word-play. This personage had been holding Von Bulowitz in abeyance in the hope that Mrs. Ferry Dobbs, or, at least, Mrs. Egerton, would arrive and save the party from the taint of the Jones-Smythes.

"Oh, Mrs. Dobbs," he cried, with satisfaction, "I'm so glad you've come. Now the music can begin."

"Oh, really!" answered Mrs. Dobbs, wearily.

"Fancy music without Mrs. Dobbs," said Bertie Beacher, as he deferentially exchanged the royal fan for a pocket-handkerchief. Then, as there was a manifest pause in the edifying conversation, he addressed the host. "I say, Schuyler, when's the Johnny going to fiddle?"

"We are only waiting for Mrs. Dobbs," answered the host, quietly, without betraying his disgust.

"Oh, really!" said Mrs. Dobbs, languidly.

And, meanwhile, where was Dobbs? The butler had announced his name, and he had followed meekly in the swash of the royal party, stumbling awkwardly over a panther's head by the door. But nobody noticed his mortification, and nobody noticed him, thin, sallow little man that he was. He slunk into a corner to pull his gray whiskers and twitch his eyes, like a frightened mouse caught in a trap. But he was only Ferry Dobbs, President of the Trans-Mississippi Railway System and the Beet Sugar Trust. So why should people bother about him?

A reverential hush fell upon the gathering in the back drawing-room as the resplendent queen appeared in the doorway. While taking the proffered seat of honor she glanced at the ever-faithful Bertie in a way indicative of a desire. The scent-bottle and fan were carefully deposited in her lap, and then the *cavalier servente* hastened in search of the lost object. He found him in a far-off corner hiding behind a newspaper, vainly hoping he had been forgotten. Alas, for the schemes of Ferry Dobbs to escape detection! The vigilant Bertie brushed aside the folds of the *Evening Post* and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Wake up, Dobbs; you're wanted!" was the ruthless command that aroused the little financier from his revery and caused him to amble meekly by the side of Bertie Beacher toward the back drawing-room.

Already the strains of Von Bulowitz's Stradivarius were resonant, and poor Ferry Dobbs trembled at his fate.

Not so the wily Dickie Willing. Having started the *maestro* on his fell career, he stole quietly through the curtains and almost fell into the arms of Renée Dressler.

"Come, Dickie," she said, taking the impresario gently but firmly by the coat sleeve and turning him about, "face the music."

"Don't have to," chuckled Dickie; "I furnished it."

"Pity you can't furnish yourself."

"With what?"

"Brains, dear boy," she murmured, sweetly, as she disappeared between the curtains.

"Don't need 'em in society," he called after her. Then, with evident self-appreciation, he giggled, "Ha! Rather neat, what!" But, as no one was there to applaud his witticism, he sauntered lazily toward the smoking-room door and collided with Norman Wendell.

"Hello, Normy!" he said. "Music's on—better hurry."

"No; I'm in no mood for music to-night," Wendell answered, dejectedly, and Dickie Willing stared, unable to comprehend that a man could have feelings to betray.

He was on the point of chaffing Wendell, when the music suddenly ceased.

"Hello! what's up?" Dickie exclaimed, visions of a fiasco disturbing the equanimity of his soul. Wendell was too absorbed with his own misery to vouchsafe a reply; but before Dickie could reach the scene of action Bertie Beacher appeared between the curtains, an expression of horror on his usually vacuous countenance.

"I say, fellows," he cried, "that long-haired idiot stopped playing because Mrs. Ferry Dobbs was talking."

"He deserves a medal if he can make her talk," Wendell muttered, laconically.

"Ha! Rather neat, what?" giggled Dickie Willing, much to the horror of the faithful Beacher, while a newcomer, in the person of Monty Dressler, bored beyond endurance, joined the trio.

"Damn! I can't stand that noise," he grumbled, and then, in a tone that gave expression to his desires, he whimpered, plaintively: "I say, fellows, my tongue's hanging out."

"I know where the old boy keeps his rum," whispered Dickie. "Let's make a sneak."

"Well, rather," exclaimed the thirsty Monty. "You've saved my life."

"Come on, Norman," cried Dickie, seizing Wendell's arm and dragging him toward the smoking-room.

"No, thanks," muttered Wendell, disengaging his arm.

"Oh, he's on the water-wagon," sneered Monty. "Come on, Bertie."

"What!" exclaimed Beacher, with the air of a tragedy queen; "desert Mrs. Ferry Dobbs? Never!" Then, in pursuance of his duty, he strode toward the other room, leaving his thirsty friends to wend their way together.

Thus Norman Wendell was left alone again to ruminate on the strange fatality that brought him face to face with the crisis of his life. "Would she come?" he wondered, one vision always before him. "Were eyes ever so blue and tender?" he asked himself, "or a voice so soft? Was ever so beautiful a face crowned by such matchless hair—was ever a mouth so sweet—was ever woman so divinely graceful?" Then he laughed at his lover's enthusiasm and paced the floor again, wondering—always wondering. "Ah, well," he sighed at last, "a fool falls in love, and a wise man gets over it—if he can."

IV

If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.

—*Romeo and Juliet*.

THE waiting seemed to him an age, but the applause that greeted Von Bulowitz's first number had barely died away when Wendell was startled by the rustle of a gown. He turned, instinctively knowing it was Margaret Irvington. To explain that intuition would be to solve the mystery of love.

"How late you are," he said; "I have been waiting for you."

She gave him her hand and smiled. "I was detained—I could not get away from dinner. But why wait for me?"

Had he been less in love he might have realized that she said this with no special interest beyond the kindness due from an old and sincere friend. But that tall, dark-haired girl, with the tender blue eyes, carelessly buttoning her glove, was to him the most radiantly beautiful creature in

the whole wide world. He could not analyze nor argue; he could only gaze and blunder forth in a stupid way the reason for his being there.

"I waited because I wanted to talk to you; because there is something I must say to you to-night."

She looked at him in amazement. "Why, Norman," she answered, "how mysterious you are, and how serious, too." Then she hesitated, for there was something in his glance that startled her. "Come," she said, cheerfully, "let us hear the music. What you have to say isn't so very pressing, is it?"

"Yes. Forgive me if I insist." He quietly placed a chair beside her. "Won't you be seated?" he asked. "I sha'n't detain you long."

She took the chair reluctantly and waited for him to speak. But words failed him.

"Come," she said, "what is it? Have you committed murder, or been sued for libel for your latest portrait? I know it must be something very serious." Her tone was almost flip-pant, and it made her ashamed, for she had not meant to hurt him. "Well?" she said, finally, in a way that gave him courage.

"I hardly know how to begin," he sighed. Then he smiled at his own awkwardness.

"Dear me," she laughed, "this is more serious than I thought, Norman. Why, you must be in love! Tell me, who is she? Surely you can trust an old friend."

"*Friend!*" he said, bitterly, "I detest the word."

Margaret began now to divine the portent of his remarks, and tried to turn him from his purpose.

"You ought not to detest me," she said, laughingly. "We've known each other too long. Why, we used to make mud pies together!"

Wendell looked into her eyes long and earnestly. "Yes," he said, "it seems as if I had always known you. Do you remember that day in the country, so long ago, when we were playing in the hay, and I told you that I loved you—that I should always love you?"

"Yes, I remember. I—I cried—then I kissed you; but we were only children then." Tears filled her eyes.

"And if I were to tell you," he said, earnestly, "that I have loved you every day, every hour since then?"

Margaret trembled. "Oh, Norman," she pleaded, "two such old friends as we are—why, that could not be."

"Couldn't it?" he answered, eagerly. "Why not?"

She took his hand and held it tightly. "Norman, can't you see?" she said. "Don't make me tell you in so many words."

He drew his hand away. "Don't say any more," he said, with an effort. "I understand."

"And you won't think less of me?" "I only wish I could."

"Don't say that," she begged. "Don't make it harder for me."

Wendell looked at her curiously. "How beautiful you are," he said. "Does it make you happy to be absolutely beautiful—to be absolutely certain of your power?"

"What a strange question!" she answered, in astonishment.

"Is it? I—I was thinking of your future."

"My future?"

"Yes. I was wondering what he will be like, the—the man whom you will marry."

"Shall I tell you?" she said, suddenly, looking up into his face.

"Yes," he answered. "I have a reason for wishing to know."

Margaret turned away thoughtfully. "He will be a man," she said, slowly, "every inch of him—careless and impetuous, if you like, but considerate enough to treat me like a good fellow and an equal. He will make me feel that I can help him and be of some use to him in his daily life. He will never let me know that I own him body and soul, and he will never tell me I am the only woman he has ever loved. There—that is the sort of man I shall marry."

"You have answered my question," he answered, quietly. He was thinking of a man whose portrait she had

seemed to draw. Margaret left her seat and walked slowly away. Then she turned swiftly and came toward him.

"Do you think I am heartless?" she asked.

"I think I shall always worship you," he answered, sadly.

She placed a hand upon his arm. "I care for you a great deal, Norman," she said. "Do—do you want me to marry you?"

He looked into her eyes searchingly. "No," he said, with an effort.

She turned away. "I understand," she answered; "believe me, I do."

"Then we will forget, and only remember that we are the same old friends."

"Always that," she said, impulsively. "I could not bear to have it otherwise."

There was a moment of silence. Each was thinking; she of the past, he of the future—as if there could be a future, now.

"And the music, Margaret," he said, finally. "We mustn't miss it all."

They walked together toward the other room, where the deep-toned strains of Tristan's dying love-song came softly from the touch of a master hand. He drew back the curtain for her to pass.

"Believe me," she whispered, softly, "it is better so."

"For you—yes."

V

A weak, poor, innocent lamb.

—*Macbeth.*

"So Freddie Carroll waited an hour at the stage door, and she was with you all the time!" laughed Monty Dressler, as he strode through the smoking-room door arm-in-arm with Dickie Willing. Their thirst was appeased, and the world was rose-colored.

"Ha! Rather neat, what?" chuckled Dickie, at the thought of Freddie Carroll's discomfiture. Then, seeing that his friend was headed straight for the shrine of Apollo, in the incar-

nation of Von Bulowitz, he laughed derisively.

"What, more music?"

"Got to," replied Monty, meekly.

"The missis, you know."

"Don't string me," said Dickie with a wink. "Who's the girl?"

"Come along and I'll show you," said Monty, trying to drag his friend in the way he would have him go.

Dickie, however, had no desire to be caught in any such trap. He planted his feet stubbornly and refused to move.

"No, sir," he protested. "No Von Bulowitz for me. I delivered the goods—that's all I'm paid for."

Whereupon Monty was obliged to wend his way alone—not to the "missis," but to the side of the particular charmer with whom he was for the time being engaged in "frivolous."

Dickie Willing, left alone, began to philosophize. His reasoning was not deep, but it was to the point, considering his dilapidated finances.

"Why isn't old Schuyler my uncle?" he mused, gazing at the Dutch ancestors that adorned the walls. "Ainslee's got his coffers full already, while I—well, the luck some fellows have!" Then he beheld a vision of loveliness that made him rub his eyes. A young girl with the golden curls of innocence had stolen into the room and was cautiously peering through the curtains at the great Von Bulowitz.

Dickie perked his head in his most winning way and tip-toed toward her.

"Hello, prettiness," he whispered in a little pink ear.

With a smothered exclamation she darted away, but Dickie was not to be escaped by any such manœuvre. He stepped before her and barred her passage.

"Don't be frightened," he said, reassuringly. "I won't bite."

"But I can't talk to you," answered the girl, naïvely. "I don't know you."

"Never mind, I know you," he laughed.

"But papa would scold me," she protested. "I'm not out yet. How dare you speak to me?"

"Because you're just about the prettiest thing I ever saw."

"And you're perfectly horrid," she pouted, stamping her little foot. "So there!"

"I'm horrid, am I?" said Dickie, in a tone of disapprobation.

"Don't believe I like you, after all. Go to bed, little girl—go to bed," he continued, with a deprecating wave of his hand.

"Well, I never! How old do you suppose I am?"

"Look seventeen," he chuckled, "act seven, general average, twelve. Ha! Rather neat, what?"

"I—I hate you," she cried, her face crimson with rage.

"Never did have any luck," he drawled, mournfully. "You hate me—I think you're the nicest ever—we're up against it. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to leave you right now," she answered, with an indignant toss of her head, "and I hope I'll never see you again."

"You'll have to see me when you're out," he laughed, barring her way again. "You'll never get on unless you're nice to me. I lead all the co-tillions. I'm Dickie Willing. Everybody knows me."

"I don't," she answered, with a sneer on her pretty lips. "I don't believe you know me."

"Rather. I know everybody. You're little Eveline Schuyler. Papa's darling, brought up in a convent so you won't be spoiled. Oh, I'm not such a fool as I look."

"Aren't you, really?" she replied, with a stare of amazement, which was calculated to make him feel decidedly small.

"No, honest," Dickie said, straightening himself and assuming an attitude of dignity. "I could teach you a lot."

"Could you?" she answered, solemnly, but with a merry twinkle in her big blue eyes. "You don't look as if you knew anything. How would you begin?"

Dickie swelled his chest imposingly. "By making love to you," he mur-

mured, with his most fetching smile.

"Oh, how nice!" she exclaimed, with evident relish. "And how would you end?"

"By making love to someone else."

"How horrid!"

"But it would teach you a lot. I say, do you read French?"

"Of course," she said, indignantly.

Dickie laughed. "Then I'll send you some novels."

"But papa won't let you," she protested. "He says that the world is a very wicked place. I must never know anything about it until I come out."

"By Jove!" he cried, longingly, "what a time you'll have learning!"

"Oh, I hope so. Just think! Next winter I'm going to dances and dinner-parties!"

"Then you've no time to lose," he chuckled. "I'll send you the books to-morrow. Let's see," he continued, with mock gravity—"Madame Bovary,' 'Sapho,' 'Nana' and—'Aphrodite'—no, you'd better not have that to begin with."

But the wickedness of his remark was lost on Eveline, for the austere form of her father appeared between the curtains.

"There's papa!" she whispered. "Don't let him see me," and, quick as a flash, she dropped behind the back of a big chair, while Willing, with chivalrous intent, rapidly placed himself in a way to cover her retreat.

"Sneak!" he whispered, as Nicholas Schuyler, quite unconscious of the situation, approached the fire.

"Sir, did you address me?" said the elder man, testily.

"I, sir? No, sir," blurted Dickie, much taken aback. "I was admiring that picture," he continued, hurriedly, pointing to a solemn burgher over the mantelpiece, with the idea of diverting Schuyler's attention. "Fine old cock, that."

"That gentleman, sir," exclaimed the host, indignantly, "was my ancestor, Peter Van Cortland, one of the 'nine men' of New Amsterdam in 1647."

"By Jove, what a nose!" cried Dickie, admiringly. "Did he die of drink?" The host looked at the picture to see if Dickie's insulting insinuation was justified by appearances. And meanwhile Eveline stole out of the room. Dickie had just time to throw her a kiss and she to shake her head reprovingly and make a face at her father, when Nicholas Schuyler turned upon the offending Dickie with the rage of offended family pride.

"Young man," he said, "you've been drinking!"

"Rather," chuckled Dickie, taking his arm. "Let's have another, just to show there's no ill feeling."

Whereupon he proceeded to lead the indignant Knickerbocker toward the smoking-room. But Nicholas Schuyler was in no mood to submit to such indignity. He threw Dickie aside, and exclaimed, angrily: "No, sir; I will not. As for you, sir, I can find no excuse—"

What the outcome of this *contrescènes* might have been is hard to say, for, before the situation became more untenable for the unfortunate Dickie, Monty Dressler appeared in the doorway, and seeing the impresario, called out, joyfully: "I say, Dickie, supper's on!"

"By Jove! where?" cried Dickie. With three long strides he reached the door, and, arm in arm with Monty, was proceeding supperward before the stately host could recover from his astonishment.

"Dear, dear," Mr. Schuyler exclaimed, gasping for breath. "In my day it was three bottles and under the table to play the man, now it's three cocktails and into society to play the fool."

Then the servants drew aside the curtains, disclosing the great Von Bulowitz surrounded by a cluster of feminine worshippers.

"Superb!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones-Smythe, basking in the effulgence of the *maestro's* smile. "Such feeling!"

"It was just too sweet!" gushed her daughter Mabel.

"Ladies," vociferated the little Teuton, proudly, striking an attitude

that nearly lost him his balance, "you have heard the great Von Bulowitz. Ah, the beautiful woman! She always make me perspire—*non*, I mean inspire—ah, the language of English!"

"How touching! What pathos!" sighed Mrs. Jones-Smythe, gazing into his eyes with a languor quite unsuitable to her two hundred pounds of avoirdupois.

Mr. Schuyler was so disgusted with this drivelling hero-worship that he brusquely put an end to the proceedings by offering his arm to Mrs. Ferry Dobbs.

"Mrs. Dobbs," he said, courteously, "won't you honor me? We couldn't sup without you."

"Oh, really?" murmured the queen, with an air of condescension, while Bertie Beacher rose to the occasion manfully.

"Fancy a supper without Mrs. Dobbs!" he exclaimed, with an expression of disgust at the possibility of such an untoward catastrophe.

VI

Struggling to be free, art more engaged.

—*Hamlet*.

THE alacrity with which the announcement of supper was greeted by the men might be taken as an indication that they were but scantily nourished, were it not that eating is a *sine qua non* of Anglo-Saxon society. On the Continent the social shibboleth is *devoir*; with us it is devour. To paraphrase the words of Bertie Beacher: Fancy society without supper—especially in New York!

Wendell had been waiting for a word with Ainslee, and the onset of the guests upon the buffet gave him the opportunity. He called his friend aside just as the latter was on the point of taking Margaret in to supper.

"Schuyler, I—I've told her," he said, hesitatingly.

"Already?" Ainslee answered, in surprise. "Well?"

"I was right—I have no chance."

"Well, perhaps I'm not the one, either," said Ainslee, with an effort to be cheerful.

"No; it's you," Wendell replied. "She as much as told me."

Ainslee glanced toward Margaret. "I almost wish it had been you," he said. She was standing near the door, talking with Renée Dressler, unconscious of the part she was playing in the drama of two men's lives.

"By gad, she is beautiful!" he exclaimed. "She's not like the rest!"

"If you treat her like the rest," said Wendell, suddenly, "remember, I'll owe you nothing."

Ainslee looked at his friend meaningfully. "Norman, you've had your chance," he said. "I've played fair."

"Yes. It's your turn now. There's my hand on it. You—you don't know what it costs me."

Ainslee grasped Wendell's hand. "And mine, too," he said, with determination. "There is no other woman—there never will be."

While ostensibly bestowing praise upon Margaret Irvington's gown, Renée Dressler had been watching the two men out of the corner of her eye. Being satisfied that something serious was transpiring, she edged anxiously in their direction, with the hope of catching a stray word or so. Ainslee saw her manoeuvre, and walked away from Wendell quietly, staring at her as he passed. Renée laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

"I wondered if you had forgotten me," said Margaret, reproachfully, as Ainslee joined her.

"Forget," he returned, "what is most in my mind? Impossible!"

"Well, how does that please you?" Renée said to Wendell, with an amused glance in the direction of Margaret and Ainslee.

"I might ask you the same question," he replied, coldly.

"Why so? The surest way to keep a man is to have him marry some other woman."

"Yes. Love is merely a longing for something you haven't got."

"And marriage is merely a loathing for something you have. All of

which reminds me that just at present I am longing for supper. Shall we go?"

"Oh, it's always time to do something," said Margaret, when they were alone. "Time to get up, to go out, to get dressed, to dine. Now, I suppose it's time to go to supper."

"Not now," Ainslee protested. "Make it my time, won't you?"

"If there is a time for everything," she laughed, "I suppose there is one even for you."

"Won't you let me be serious for one half-hour?"

"Were you ever serious?" she asked, doubtfully.

"I am desperately serious to-night."

"And to-morrow?"

"To-morrow depends on you, Margaret," he said, earnestly. "Did it never occur to you that I might care?"

"To-night? For one half-hour?"

"No—always. I have stumbled through life somehow, and now you come—the one woman on earth I ever believed in, or ever could believe in."

"Oh, wait, wait!" she cried. "If I dared trust you!"

"Can't you see that I mean every word?" he exclaimed, impetuously.

"For the moment, yes. But I might remember—always." Her voice trembled as she spoke, and she turned her eyes away.

"Why do you mistrust me?" he asked.

"Because everything that I know about you tells me that I should."

"Have I ever pretended to be anything? I'm no saint, if that is what you mean."

She gazed at the floor thoughtfully. "You are honest," she said, after a moment, "and that is something."

"You could make me of some use in the world," he pleaded. "You could make a man of me."

"Are you quite sure?" she answered, looking up suddenly and meeting his glance. "Men always want a woman to help them before they are married."

"No, no!" he said, anxiously. "Take me as I am—a man who has knocked about the world, with much to regret and little to be proud of. I make no pretense, except that I shall try to make you happy."

She looked into his face earnestly. "I begin to believe," she said at last. She felt the touch of his arm about her waist.

"No, no!" she cried, drawing away in fright. "Wait! Wait!"

"It is cruel to make me wait."

She turned suddenly. "One moment. Is there no other woman?"

"I can't tell you I've never been in love," he said, with an effort. "It wouldn't be true."

"And now? You know what I mean?"

"Now it is only a regret."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes," he answered, slowly, "that is all over."

"If you are deceiving yourself!" she said, with a shudder. "If I should find out that you are deceiving me!"

He took both her hands and drew her toward him. "I love you," he said, "I love you, Margaret!"

Fear and doubt were stifled by the quick beating of her heart. "Yes, I believe you," she said, impulsively.

"Only one word—it means so much."

"Yes—I love you."

When Nicholas Schuyler came into the room a moment later he blinked in astonishment at the sight that met his eyes.

"Schuyler, you rascal!" he cried, "what does this mean?"

"It means, uncle, that Miss Irvington has promised to marry me. Your bad penny has turned up heads for once."

"You lucky dog!" exclaimed the uncle. "But you don't deserve her." Then, taking Margaret's hand, he kissed her on the forehead. "My dear young lady," he said, "you've done honor to our family."

"I hope you may never think otherwise," she answered, seriously.

Renée Dressler, coming from the

supper-room, stopped in the doorway to survey the scene. She bit her lip angrily, and Norman Wendell smiled at her discomfiture.

"Oh, I beg pardon," she said, sarcastically, "do I interrupt a family council?"

"No," answered Ainslee, quickly, "a family rejoicing. Miss Irvington has promised to marry me."

She glared at him a moment, then turning to Margaret, said, with evident maliciousness: "Really, I congratulate Miss Irvington on making the match of the season."

"A woman of the world, my dear Mrs. Dressler," interrupted Mr. Schuyler, quietly, "never betrays her feelings."

Renée Dressler looked at him haughtily. "A woman of the world never has feelings to betray," she said. Then turning to Ainslee, she whispered, quickly, "Schuyler, you're a fool."

"Possibly," he answered.

Margaret saw the look of evil in her face.

"The other woman," she thought. "I wonder . . ."

PART II

ONE AFTERNOON

I

Respecting this our marriage.

—Henry VIII.

A YEAR of matrimony will usually kill the illusions of a woman, or cure her of the desire for further conquests. If fortunately allied, she will realize that the reality of satisfactory matrimony, with love to play the rôle of domestic *deus ex machina*, is a far more comfortable status than chasing rainbows. Marriage is more or less a game of give and take. Were women to recognize this fact more universally there would be fewer wives moping about in tea gowns or listening to the purring of tame cats.

It is one thing to purr sympathet-

ically in the lamplight and another to be sweet and cheerful at the breakfast table; therefore the tame cat has a distinct advantage over the liege lord until the wife discovers that he will play and purr and be ever so cunning and attractive until he has eaten the canary. But, alas! when the bird is caught and consumed the tame cat will retire to his own fireside to sleep off the effects, and when he awakes he will lick his chops and begin to search for another canary, while the lady is left to mourn the loss of her pet, if not her reputation.

A year of matrimony had brought Margaret to a point where her happiness was very much like a kite in a high wind. One moment it would soar into the clouds and the next it would almost dash itself to pieces on the ground, while all that held it was a single thread called "confidence," and that often seemed on the point of breaking.

On a cloudy afternoon in December Margaret was sitting in the library window-seat of her new house reading a novel. It was one of those stories of a woman's moods in which the disease is diagnosed without providing the cure. The author, however, seemed to realize his shortcomings, for in an apologetic way he stated, in an obscure paragraph that most readers would skip, that "Happiness is merely the habit of good impulses."

Margaret read the line again, then threw the book aside impatiently. "How little people who write books know about life!" she sighed. "Happiness must be the habit of never feeling." Then she gazed out of the window. Mrs. Egerton drove by in a new victoria, and Eveline Schuyler ran into the room, calling, impetuously: "Cousin Margaret! Cousin Margaret! Where are you?"

"Here, child," said Margaret.

"Well, if this dance is for me," pouted Eveline, "I think I might have something to say about it."

"Why, what is the matter?" Margaret asked.

"Lady Coldstream is the matter,"

the girl answered, peevishly. "What does she know about dances?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Well, Dickie Willing certainly knows something about them."

"If he knows about anything it must be about dances."

"I think you're—you're dreadful," answered Eveline, kicking a stool to give vent to her feelings. "And I don't see why you invited Lady Coldstream here, anyway."

"Why, last Summer at Homburg she rather amused me, when everything was going wrong. I told her that if she ever came to America I hoped she would stop a few days with me. She came, of course; the few days happen to have become a few weeks, but that was to be expected—the English are so very casual in America."

"Why do you let her stay?"

"I can hardly send her away. Besides, she still amuses me."

Ainslee came into the room. He glanced at Margaret a moment, then he picked up an illustrated paper, the leaves of which he turned nervously without seeing the pages. Margaret looked out of the window.

Eveline glanced from one to the other understandingly, then she turned on her heel and walked away.

"Don't go, Eveline," said Margaret. "Schuyler and I haven't anything to say to each other."

"But there's no knowing what Lady Coldstream might do to Dickie Willing if they're left alone," answered the girl, throwing aside the portière.

Ainslee waited until Eveline was out of hearing; then he put down his paper quietly and came toward his wife.

"It seems to me we have a great deal to say," he said, "if we could only say it. There was a time when we understood each other."

"Yes—before we were married," sighed Margaret. "People always understand each other then—or think they do."

"But what, in heaven's name, is the matter now?" he asked, impatiently. "What have I done?"

Margaret watched some children playing in the park. "I told you once," she said, after a moment.

"Did you?" he answered, dropping into a chair, resignedly. "It must have been a long time ago. At present you seem to revel in unexpressed grievances."

"What can't be cured must be endured," she said, as she carefully rearranged the pillows of the window-seat.

"What do you mean?" he asked, sharply.

Margaret looked at him with an expression of disdain. "You know well enough," she said. "I mean Renée Dressler."

Ainslee jumped to his feet. "Really, Margaret, you are absurd," he answered, plunging his hands into his pockets and pacing the floor. "You know that was all ended long ago."

"I know you told me so."

"Do you mean to say you believe there is anything between us now?"

"I only believe what I see," she said.

"Well, what have you seen?" he asked, stopping suddenly and looking at her with a puzzled expression.

"I saw her follow you to Homburg. I couldn't even have my honeymoon in peace."

"Homburg was very dull last Summer, and even you must admit that she is amusing."

"She must be, judging from the number of her admirers."

"There's safety in numbers, my dear," he laughed.

Margaret raised herself suddenly and looked him full in the eyes. "She's made a dead set for you," she said, "not only at Homburg, but ever since we got back. It takes a woman to see through another woman."

"How about a man seeing through another man?" he sneered. "How about Mr. Norman Wendell? He was at Homburg, too."

"What if he was? He's only a very old friend."

"He was in love with you."

"I never was in love with him," she answered, sharply. "And you were with Renée Dressler."

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "He comes to see you every day. People are talking about it already. How do you suppose I like that?"

With a start Margaret pushed the cushions aside and sprang to her feet. "Do you mean to say you believe there's anything between us?" she asked.

"I only believe what I see," he answered.

"You have no right to turn my words against me," she cried. "Do you want me to hate you?"

Ainslee laughed. Then, going toward her, he put his arm around her soothingly.

"Come, Margaret, dear," he said, "you are taking all this too seriously. Don't make a mountain out of a mole-hill. Renée Dressler is nothing to me."

She threw her arms about his neck and buried her face on his shoulder.

"Oh, Schuyler," she said, half tearfully, "if you could only see the triumphant way that woman looks at me—just as much as to say: 'You married him, but he is *mine*; do you understand? *mine*!' It began that night at your uncle's, when you told her we were engaged."

"There, dear, don't worry about it any more," he said, stroking her hair. "I wouldn't let her come between us for anything on earth."

"Will you promise you won't see her again?" she asked, eagerly.

"How can I? You know we meet her everywhere."

"Never mind; cut her. She will understand."

"I'll do anything you ask me, except be rude. I can't, with decency, cut Mrs. Dressler, but I'll see just as little of her as I can. There, does that satisfy you?"

"Then you do love me?" she exclaimed.

"Of course I love you," he said. "You know that I do. My one wish is to prove it to you."

Then he kissed her, and her happiness soared above the clouds into the clear sunshine, and the slender thread seemed strong enough to hold it there forever.

II

The elect of the land.

—*Henry VIII.*

"Oh, I say; kissing your wife!" said Lady Coldstream, stopping in the doorway and surveying the situation. "Fancy! You Americans do such extraordinary things."

Lady Coldstream was a superb creation, with frizzled hair and a wasplike waist, and wearing a tailor gown that fitted as if she had grown into it. She had big, dreamy eyes and a little, drooping mouth. Her pictures were displayed in Bond street among the types of reigning English beauties. She was thirty-eight, but she might have passed for twenty in the lamp-light.

Ainslee looked up in answer to her remark. "Why not?" he said. "It's not improper, is it?"

"Improper! No, by Jove! Idiotic!" and Lady Coldstream advanced into the room, followed by Eveline and the ubiquitous Dickie Willing. "Coldstream tried to kiss me once. I asked him if he was so unpopular that no other woman would."

"Ha! Rather neat, what?" gurgled Dickie, with evident appreciation.

"And that silly man, too," rejoined Lady Coldstream, with a glance of scorn in the direction of the unfortunate Willing; "he positively objects to having any sitting-out corners at the party."

"Rather!" expostulated Dickie. "Nobody will dance."

"Yes," exclaimed Eveline. "It would spoil Dickie's cotillion."

"My dear," said Lady Coldstream to Margaret, "you really must have them. Fancy a dance with no place to kiss a girl, or even hold her hand! Why, in London the men wouldn't come."

"But this is New York," Ainslee suggested.

"Aren't the men human over here?"

"Oh, yes, but not at dances," answered Ainslee, walking toward the door of his den. "They have so many better opportunities."

"Oh, Schuyler," expostulated Margaret. "How shocking!" But he did not heed the reproof.

"Send me a pick-me-up, Schuyler," called Lady Coldstream; "there's a dear—feeling rather dicky."

"Certainly," he said, as he closed the door.

Lady Coldstream threw herself into an easy chair and crossed her legs. Then, taking from her pocket a little silver case adorned with a coronet, she proceeded to light a violet-tipped cigarette.

Eveline sidled toward Margaret, keeping an eye on Lady Coldstream. "Cousin Margaret," she said, in a stage whisper, "don't let her spoil everything. Dickie's been working so hard to make the dance go."

"I should say!" exclaimed Dickie, proudly. "Didn't sleep all last night. Inventing something startling. Got it, too. Going to have a live baby elephant to bring in the favors. I'm going to drive him myself in a Roman chariot—Ha! Rather neat, what?"

"Nasty beast," interrupted Lady Coldstream, puckering up her nose. "He'll be sure to stick his trunk down my neck looking for sugar plums."

"But won't Mrs. Ferry Dobbs be crazy!" chuckled Dickie. "She had only a goat."

"Well, scratch my entry, then," said Lady Coldstream, coughing from an over-inhalation of smoke. "I can run a dance, but not a menagerie."

Just then a servant approached, bearing a tray on which was a decanter and a bottle of soda. Dickie looked at the tray longingly, but there was only one glass. Eveline pulled his coatsleeve.

"Now's our chance," she whispered.

"Rather—before she changes her mind." Then they tiptoed quietly out of the room.

"That's a quaint Johnny," said Lady Coldstream, as she poured out what men would dub "a pretty stiff drink." "Does he get paid for managing parties?"

"Yes," answered Margaret, taking up her book again and running over

the leaves carelessly. "We all help him out that way. He had a fortune once, but it ran away."

"Just like Lord Meadowmere," grunted Lady Coldstream. "He had the 'oof' and a wife, too; but they both ran away. Poor dear, he had to turn dressmaker. I was dotty about him once, so went to his place just to give him a leg up. Fancy! He took my clothes off and stuck pins into me. Beastly improper, wasn't it?"

"Of course— Oh, what did you say?" said Margaret, vaguely.

Lady Coldstream put down her glass and looked at Margaret. She was gazing at the floor, and did not notice that she was being surveyed by the critical eye of a woman who had lived the pace.

"I say, Margaret, you *are* cut up," vouchsafed Lady Coldstream, after a moment.

"I was only worrying," Margaret sighed.

"My dear, no man is worth worrying about."

"I didn't say it was a man."

"My dear, no woman ever worries about anything else."

"It was only Schuyler."

"My dear," continued Lady Coldstream, laconically, "don't bother about your husband until you are so old other men won't bother about you."

"I am not that kind," Margaret said, sharply.

"Oh, I say," murmured her companion, "how about that painter of yours?"

"He's only an old friend."

"Oh, of course," said Lady Coldstream, pointedly, "they always are."

Margaret's face flushed. "Muriel, believe me," she protested. Then she checked herself. "Oh, you would never understand—why discuss the matter?"

"As you please," answered Lady Coldstream, reaching for her whisky and soda. "Let's talk about the weather, or Charlier-Duval. He's coming this afternoon, isn't he?"

"Yes, I've asked Mrs. Ferry Dobbs and a few people to see my portrait."

"'Pon my honor," exclaimed Lady Coldstream, putting down her glass emphatically. "I can't see how you endure that man. He's a French cad, and that's 'the limit,' as you say over here. But you Americans will take up with anything that's foreign."

"Exactly," laughed Margaret. "That's why you have had such a success."

"I say," frowned Lady Coldstream, "that *is* a nasty one."

Margaret did not vouchsafe a reply. There were moments when Lady Coldstream bored her. She was better taken at dessert than as a tonic before dinner. So the English beauty sipped her pick-me-up in silence, and Margaret turned the leaves of her novel until a servant appeared and announced:

"Monsoor Duval!"

A diminutive Frenchman, with the rosette of the Legion of Honor in his buttonhole, followed the announcement, and bowed impressively with his hand on his heart. His hair floated in several directions, and so did his tie. But he was a portrait painter, *à la mode*, and was necessarily made up for the part, even to trousers that did not fit and a turned down collar of Byronic cut.

"*Chère madame*, your *serviteur*," he said to Margaret. Then, taking her hand and pressing it to his lips: "Will you permeet ze humble homage of art at ze shrine of *beauté*?"

Lady Coldstream giggled — but Charlier-Duval, undismayed, turned toward her and, striking an attitude of admiration, said, effusively:

"Ah, vat a picture! Zat pose—I paint him!"

"What!" exclaimed Lady Coldstream, "paint me with a whiskey and soda? Happy thought, by Jove!—your pictures do need spirit."

"Oh, do not say me no," said the little Frenchman, kissing her hand and looking into her eyes pleadingly. Then he whispered, confidentially: "For you I make ze price only five thousand dollar—ze honaire ees so great!"

"Well, when you paint me," she

growled, drawing her hand away with a little shrug of disgust, "I'll be so old the colors will run at sight of me."

"Ah, Lady Coldstream, you aire cruelle," he sighed, perking his head on one side and screwing his face and shoulders into an expression of despair. Then, turning to Margaret, he asked, anxiously; "But vill ze great Meeses Ferry Dobbs come to honaire my *chef d'œuvre*?"

"I asked her," Margaret answered. "As there'll only be a *very* few people, she'll probably come."

"Unless I paint ze great Meeses Ferry Dobbs," exclaimed the Frenchman, "Carolus and Chartran vill say I make no success in America."

"Then make her an exclusive price," said Margaret, coldly, as she turned to greet Norman Wendell, who, as *l'ami de la maison*, had sauntered in unannounced.

"Oh, Norman," she said, eagerly, "I'm so glad you've come. My portrait's just finished. I want to know what you think of it." Turning to the Frenchman, she continued: "Mr. Charlier-Duval, let me introduce Mr. Wendell, one of our American painters."

The foreigner looked Wendell over from head to foot; then, with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders, he said: "Ah, I deed not know zere were any painters in America."

"Exactly," Wendell murmured, gently. "We American painters have to go to Europe to find appreciation, Monsieur *Charlatan* Duval."

"*Charlier-Duval*, monsieur," cried the Frenchman, growing very red in the face.

"Pardon me, I had not heard the name before," said Wendell. "I have just returned from Paris."

"Monsieur, you insult me!" shouted Charlier-Duval, inflating his chest.

Margaret, frightened at the *contre-temps*, stepped between them hurriedly.

"Really, gentlemen," she exclaimed, "I— Oh, there's Mrs. Ferry Dobbs."

Charlier-Duval drew himself up proudly. "Then I vait," he said,

with an impressive gesture of defiance, while Wendell turned on his heel and sauntered away.

Mrs. Dobbs and Beacher swept into the room with terrifying magnificence, while the lowly partner of the royal joys and sorrows stumbled over an obtrusive taboret and dropped his hat.

"So glad you could come," said Margaret, cordially. "I do hope you'll like the portrait."

"Oh, really," murmured the queen languidly, handing her muff to Beacher, who passed it disdainfully to Dobbs.

"May I introduce Monsieur Duval?" Margaret continued. "He is so anxious to meet you."

"Oh, really," muttered Mrs. Dobbs, condescendingly, handing her pocket-book to Beacher, who, after glancing at Dobbs distrustfully, put it quietly in his own pocket.

Meanwhile, the little Frenchman clicked his heels together and bowed obsequiously.

"*Chère madame*," he said, "your *serviteur*." Then, pressing the royal hand to his lips, he continued, with effusion: "Will you permeet ze humble homage of art at ze shrine of *beauté*?"

But Mrs. Dobbs remained unmoved. With the desperation of despair, the painter posed himself for his *coup de grâce*.

"Ah, vat a picture!" he cried. "Ze pose of a queen! I paint him!"

"Oh, really," she answered, coldly, casting a look of annoyance at the faithful Beacher.

"Oh, say me not no! For you I make ze price only twenty thousand dollar," whispered the Frenchman, confidentially, "ze honaire ees so great."

But Beacher rose to the occasion. "I say, Mrs. Dobbs," he interrupted, "there's Lady Coldstream."

"Oh, really," eagerly cried the queen, turning away from poor Charlier-Duval, and leaving him to glare dejectedly at her departing grandeur. "Queen!" he muttered. "*Non—canaille!*"

"So awfully good of you to dine

with us on Thursday, dear Lady Coldstream," said Bertie Beacher, breaking into the conversation the English beauty was holding with Norman Wendell. "Isn't it, Mrs. Dobbs?"

Lady Coldstream gave them both a withering glance. "Oh, really," she said. Then she turned her back and continued her talk with Wendell.

The queen drew herself up with dignity and gasped.

"Never mind, she's English," whispered Beacher, soothingly, and together they sought a refuge in the corner, while Dobbs, who had witnessed the collapse of the royal assurance, grinned a meek grin of satisfaction.

"I do hope we are not too late," shouted Mrs. Jones-Smythe, as she burst into the room with breathless haste. "We did hurry so to get away from Mrs. Egerton's, didn't we, Mabel?"

"Yes, mamma," simpered the dutiful daughter.

"You're just in time," said Margaret, resignedly. Then, seeing in the arrival of Monty Dressler a chance of escape, she called to the Frenchman, who was still alone: "Let me introduce you to Mrs. Jones-Smythe, Monsieur Duval." And leaving the painter to his fate, she turned to Monty Dressler eagerly, feeling that even he was a relief.

Charlier-Duval glanced at Mrs. Jones-Smythe and shuddered. His bow was lacking in impressiveness.

"It is a great honor to meet so distinguished an artist," was the effusive greeting of Mrs. Jones-Smythe. "Isn't it, Mabel?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Oh, I beg pardon," said the admiring mother, "this is my daughter, Mabel. She adores art. She paints tea-cups charmingly."

Charlier-Duval lifted his eyebrows in mild amazement, while Mabel seized her mother's arm hurriedly. "Oh, mamma," she whispered, "there is Mrs. Ferry Dobbs."

"Oh," exclaimed the mother, "I must speak to her." And, with a

hurried excuse to Duval, she waddled toward the queen, dragging Mabel after her.

Duval shrugged his shoulders suspiciously. "Jones-Smythe," he murmured. "I know not ze name." Then he took a little morocco-bound note-book from his pocket and hurriedly ran over the pages. "Bah!" he said, finally. "She ees not in ze seventy-five. I make her not a price."

Margaret had been endeavoring, ineffectually, to converse with Monty Dressler; but books and music were beyond his understanding, so her efforts ended abruptly, while his eyes traveled about the room restlessly, as if he were seeking a plausible means of escape.

"I say, aren't you jealous?" he said, with a meaning glance across the room. "Look at Wendell and Lady Coldstream—I wouldn't trust him too far, if I were you. She's quite a fascinator."

"Really, Mr. Dressler," answered Margaret, coldly, "I fail to see the point."

"The point!" laughed Dressler. Meeting a stony stare, he hesitated. "Oh, the point is—ah—um—where's your husband?"

"You'll find him in his den," and Margaret turned away abruptly, leaving him to chuckle to himself: "I had her there," as he sauntered off in search of Ainslee.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Jones-Smythe was pounding away with verbal artillery in a vain attempt to reduce the defenses of Mrs. Ferry Dobbs; but the latter was equal to the occasion, and after repeated repulses the attacking party was forced to plead, as a final effort:

"Oh, I'm so disappointed. Wouldn't Friday do, or Monday—or any day you like? You know I am counting on you."

"Oh, really!" said Mrs. Ferry Dobbs, frigidly, with a stare that was absolutely squelching, as she turned on her heel and strode away, leaving the discomfited tuft-hunter to recover from her ignominious defeat as best she might.

"The cat!" hissed Mrs. Jones-Smythe, when she had caught her breath.

"Never mind, mamma," said Mabel, reassuringly. "We're as rich as she is—some day it'll be our turn."

Lady Coldstream had been taking in this little comedy of manners. "The queen is rather nifty, what?" she said to Wendell.

"Yes, it is getting more difficult every day for a well-bred woman to keep her position in New York."

"Poor Mrs. Smythe, I pity her," replied Lady Coldstream, feelingly.

"Don't pity the rich—they, too, have their pleasures," said Wendell, quoting a proverb he had heard somewhere.

Charlier-Duval, however, was growing impatient. He stood alone in the centre of the stage, but the audience failed somehow to realize the presence of the star.

"And ze portrait," he called to Margaret. "Meeses Ferry Dobbs have not seen him."

"Muriel, dear," said Margaret to Lady Coldstream, "won't you lead the way? I am really ashamed to show myself off."

"You ought to be proud, my dear—it flatters you tremendously."

"Thanks, dear," laughed Margaret. "I shall never be conceited so long as you are here."

Lady Coldstream did not vouchsafe a reply, but obediently led the way to the drawing-room, followed by the Jones-Smythes. Charlier-Duval swelled his chest imposingly and held the portière for Mrs. Ferry Dobbs to pass, while Beacher, obedient to a glance from the queen, disturbed the equanimity of Ferry Dobbs's slumbers by shaking him and saying, gruffly: "Wake up, Dobbs; you're wanted!" Whereupon the little millionaire shuffled meekly toward the drawing-room, upsetting a vase of flowers as he passed.

III

Such cause of suspicion.

—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

MARGARET turned away from the retreating guests with an expression

of relief. Fortunately, the presence of Lady Coldstream would gratify the pretentiousness of Mrs. Ferry Dobbs, so she felt at liberty to steal a word with Wendell.

"How tiresome those people are," she said, sinking wearily into the corner of a divan.

"Yet they are your friends," answered Wendell, drawing up a chair.

"Hardly," she said, with a tinge of sarcasm. "One has only acquaintances and enemies in society."

"Why so cynical, Margaret?" Wendell asked, looking into her face anxiously. "It isn't like you."

"Do you know what I am like? I hardly know myself."

"I know what you have been to me," he said.

"You foolish boy," she laughed. Then, after a moment's thought, she continued: "I wish you would fall in love with some nice girl. I want you to be happy. I am almost happy myself to-day."

"Why, only yesterday you told me—" he exclaimed.

"Forget it, Norman," she interrupted. "I was wrong to speak of it. It was nothing—only my foolish jealousy."

"Are you quite sure?" he asked.

"Why do you ask me that?" she said.

Wendell hesitated. "Because I might help you," he said, finally. "He would listen to me. I could *make* him listen."

"You needn't," answered Margaret. "We talked it over to-day. We understand each other now."

Wendell looked out of the window at the passing carriages. "Forgive me," he answered, quietly, "for thinking Schuyler would do anything to make you unhappy."

"You are always a comfort, Norman," said Margaret. "It is something to know there is one person one can count on."

For a moment Wendell did not answer. Then he turned suddenly and, looking into her eyes, said, earnestly:

"Let me help you if there is ever need—let me still see you often."

Margaret smiled. She was thinking of what Lady Coldstream had said about husbands and other men. "And the more often I see you, the more people will talk," she said, placing a cushion behind her back.

"Need we throw away our friendship for that?" he asked. "People will always talk about something."

"I suppose so," she sighed.

"Let me feel I am something to you," he said, anxiously; "that I have still some part in your life."

She looked up and met his eyes. "And should I need your help," she asked, playfully, "will you promise me your strong right arm?"

He pressed her hand to his lips. "Yes, I promise," he said.

It was not the moment either would have chosen for the entrance of Renée Dressler, but the unexpected happened; just as Wendell took Margaret's hand she appeared in the doorway and, taking in the situation at a glance, smiled with undisguised satisfaction at what she saw.

"Oh, I beg pardon," she said, sarcastically, "I fear I interrupt."

Margaret blushed. Innocent as Wendell's action had been, she saw quickly what Renée Dressler meant.

"Not at all, I assure you," she said, confusedly.

"Really—I heard Mr. Wendell had gone to Westbury—so finding him here, I thought—" Then Renée Dressler looked at the ceiling and smiled.

"I am going later," said Wendell, sharply. "There is surely nothing surprising in finding me here."

"With so attractive a woman—certainly not. But it looked as if I might be *de trop*."

"That is usually the case with a third party, Mrs. Dressler, where you are concerned," said Margaret, coldly. Then she turned away abruptly and, followed by Wendell, entered the drawing-room.

Renée Dressler shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. "So it is to be war," she said to herself. "Very well; I accept the challenge."

Going to the table, she took up a

photograph of Margaret and eyed it critically. Smiling significantly, she put it back in its place and, taking up her muff, started toward the door of Ainslee's den, where she met her husband. Monty was evidently in bad humor, for he swore under his breath and slammed the door violently.

"Please remember you're not at home, Monty," said his wife, reprovingly. "Your domestic manners hardly adorn society."

"Society be damned!" muttered Monty, "and Ainslee, too. He's gone back on me."

"You can't blame him, can you?" sneered Renée. "A husband who fleeces his wife's admirers is not an edifying spectacle, even in New York."

"You're a nice lot to talk," he growled. "You and your beastly extravagance have got me into this mess. Now you've got to get me out. You must make Ainslee renew the loan."

"And if I can't or won't?"

"Then we leave Fifth avenue for the poor-house."

"How charming!" Renée exclaimed, with an air of relief. "Then I shall be able to divorce you for non-support."

"None of your confounded sarcasm," snarled Monty. "Can't you see the hole I'm in?"

"My dear Monty," she answered, sweetly, "you seem to forget that Schuyler Ainslee is married."

"I forget nothing," he answered, with a meaning look. "I simply give you credit for being a clever woman."

"You flatter me," she exclaimed, "but I fear your confidence is misplaced. Only yesterday he asked me to return his letters."

She drew a bundle of letters from her muff and waved them tauntingly before his eyes.

"Are you fool enough to do it?" he asked.

"Why not? They are ancient history now," she said.

Dressler snatched the letters out of her hand. "Then I'll keep them," he said, drawing away from her quickly. "They might come in useful."

"Monty," she cried, angrily, "give those letters back. I'll help you in my own way, or not at all."

Dressler paid no attention to what she said, but taking one of the letters from the bundle he began to read it.

"Oh, ho!" he laughed. "This hardly sounds like ancient history. Listen!

'DEAREST R.:

'N. W. is going to the country. Meet me at the studio at 11.30. The door will be open, so don't ring. And, above all, don't disappoint me.

'Yours, as ever,
'S.'"

Monty looked at her quizzically. "When was this written?" he asked.

"Last year, I suppose," she answered, indifferently. "I have not heard from him for months."

Dressler examined the letter carefully. "There is no date," he said. "It might have been written to-day. How fortunate I am such a trusting husband!"

Renée approached him quickly and snatched the letters from his hand. "What a cad you are!" she said.

"You're not the one to call names," he answered. "I'm not the only man in New York who has gone to the devil to keep his wife in the swim. I might have been a decent chap if I hadn't married you."

"Yes, and I might have married Schuyler Ainslee and had all this," she said, with an envious glance about the room. Then she pushed him from her angrily. "Go, Monty, go," she cried. "Oh, sometimes I feel I could kill you."

He walked to the door sullenly, then he turned and looked at her. "Good God, Renée," he said, "you could give the devil points."

She did not answer, so he left her gazing at Ainslee's letter. "It might have been written yesterday," she said, when she heard his step in the hall. "What if it were?" She folded the letter carefully and put it in her muff, keeping the others in her hand.

"I'll keep that letter," she thought. "Some day, Schuyler Ainslee, I'll clip your wings."

IV

But my revenge will come.

—*Hamlet.*

WHEN Ainslee came into the library a moment later he found Renée Dressler seated before the fire, with her head thrown back and her feet on the fender, in an attitude indicative of possession. She had made up her mind to hold her ground, and such a trifling matter as Margaret's defiance had not in the least disturbed her equanimity. On the contrary, her fighting nature had been aroused, and she was resolved to win, by fair means or foul.

Ainslee deliberated a moment as to how he should greet her after the promise he had made his wife; but wishing to avoid an open rupture, at least until he had gained possession of his letters, he went toward her and said, in a friendly way:

"What, Renée, all alone?"

She glanced up and smiled. "Yes; I was waiting to give you these," she answered, handing him the packet she held in her hand.

"Thank you," he said, taking the letters without glancing at them. "Most women would have kept them."

For a moment Renée was silent. Then, with a sudden impulse, she left her seat and, turning toward him, said quickly:

"Why did you ask for them? Do you mistrust me so?"

"No," he replied, throwing the letters into the fire with a sigh of relief, "but a dead past is never buried."

"Did it never occur to you that I might hate you?" she said, in a tone of bitterness.

"You never cared enough for that."

For a moment they watched the burning letters.

"So you think love is only a momentary blaze, like that?" she said, finally.

"It is dangerous to play with fire," he answered. "Only friendship is lasting."

"Friendship is too cheap to be worth having," she sneered.

"And love is too expensive to be worth while."

"Your wife and Norman Wendell don't seem to think so."

"What do you mean?" he cried, looking up suddenly and meeting her eyes.

"Oh, nothing," she replied, turning away from the fire and placing her muff carelessly on the table. "But if I were a married man, I should never have a *best* friend."

"You have no right to say that," he said, angrily.

"Why, what have I said?"

"No more than the world says, I suppose. Life is made up of some people's misery and what other people say about it."

She looked at him meaningly.

"The way to avoid misery is not to run away from happiness."

"Happiness!" he laughed, "at the price of self-respect? No!"

"Marriage has made a prig of you," she exclaimed. "Why don't you teach your wife this new-found morality—she needs it."

Ainslee clenched his hands together.

"If a man said that," he muttered, "I'd knock him down."

"And when a woman says it?"

"I can only laugh," he answered, turning away and gazing into the fire.

She came toward him and stood beside him for a moment, so that her arm touched his. "There are none so blind as those who won't see," she said, softly. "And—and revenge would be so easy." He felt the pressure of her hand. "Are you never tempted?" she whispered, passionately.

"You tempted me once," he said, meeting her glance.

"And now? Have you forgotten?"

"I see no reason for remembering," he said, coldly, turning his eyes away. Then, seeing Mrs. Ferry Dobbs and her suite approaching, he left her and walked toward them.

"Take care!" Renée muttered under her breath. "I have not forgotten, and I may find a way to make you remember."

She sat down by the fire again and

stealthily watched the proceedings, while pretending to be absorbed in a book.

The departure of Mrs. Dobbs was the signal for the breaking up of the party. Charlier-Duval followed in her train, and so did Mrs. Jones-Smythe, while Dickie Willing, for the purpose of teasing Eveline, permitted himself to be captured by the simpering Mabel and led away, much to the annoyance of Miss Innocence, who, unaccustomed to such wiles, retired upstairs to weep over the infidelity of mankind in general and Dickie in particular. Norman Wendell, meanwhile, tarried over the cups with Margaret, not unobserved, however, by Renée Dressler, who quietly moved her seat so she could watch them through the door of the drawing-room.

When Ainslee returned from seeing Mrs. Ferry Dobbs to the door he passed by Mrs. Dressler without apparently noticing her.

"Really, Schuyler," she protested, leaving her seat. "Am I to be ignored as well as forgotten?"

Ainslee turned at the sound of her voice.

"I beg pardon," he said. "I thought you were having tea."

"Oh, dear, no; I was waiting—like a woman—for the last word." Then she paused and looked at him curiously. "Which must be—?"

"Which must be good-bye," he answered, coldly.

"Or good riddance," she said, with an indifferent laugh.

"Don't be sarcastic," he protested. "After all, it is the only way."

"For you! But what of me?"

"I can't change the past, even though I should regret it."

"That would be an edifying spectacle," she sneered. "The converted Mr. Ainslee regretting his past!"

Margaret left her seat by the tea table and came slowly toward them, followed by Norman Wendell. They were apparently in earnest conversation, and Ainslee's back being turned, he did not see his wife. With a quick glance Renée Dressler took in the situation and formed a plan for revenge.

"Well," she said, turning to Ainslee, and extending her hand, "the last word."

"Come, Renée," said Ainslee, "we'd better part friends."

"No," she answered, watching Margaret carefully. "Having ceased to be lovers, we'd better part enemies." "Enemies!" he exclaimed.

Renée saw Margaret start back in surprise. It was her opportunity.

"Yes," she whispered. "Remember—women do not forget as men, and—they get even in the end." Then she threw her arms about Ainslee's neck and cried, passionately: "You love me—you love me! I knew it. Tell me again that you love me!"

"With a cry of pain Margaret seized Wendell's arm. "Oh, did you see?" she exclaimed, her face white with rage.

Ainslee saw his wife, and the meaning of Renée Dressler's action dawned upon him. "Renée, for God's sake! don't you see?" he cried, disengaging himself from her sudden embrace.

Renée looked at him with a dazed expression. Then, turning toward Margaret, she quickly assumed a manner of intense embarrassment, and was for the moment confused and speechless.

"Oh," she gasped, finally, "this is most embarrassing—quite compromising, in fact." She looked helplessly from one to the other, and, turning to Ainslee, said, with a sickly smile: "Really, Schuyler, we ought to be more careful."

The scene was cleverly acted, and produced its effect. Margaret, white with anger, started toward her, but Wendell grasped her arm hurriedly.

"Don't!" he cried. "She is trying to humiliate you."

Mrs. Dressler, smiling sweetly, walked toward Margaret.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said. "I've had such a charming afternoon. Your husband has been so entertaining. But he ought to take lessons from Mr. Wendell—he's really quite a novice."

She put out her hand. Margaret turned her back abruptly.

Renée Dressler shrugged her shoulders and laughed; then, with a familiar nod to Schuyler, she walked out of the room, leaving her muff intentionally on the table.

Margaret sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"In my house—before my eyes!" she moaned. "Oh, this is unendurable."

Ainslee stood there like one stunned. He could not realize that any woman could do such a dastardly thing for the sake of a miserable revenge. He tried to think, but his brain refused to work. He could only wonder at such cruelty.

Wendell was the first to speak. Angry at the insult to Margaret, he stepped toward Ainslee.

"And this is how you keep your promise!" he cried.

Ainslee started furiously. "Yes," he muttered, "a damned sight better than you keep yours."

On the impulse of the moment Wendell raised his hand to strike.

"No, no," screamed Margaret, throwing herself between them. "For my sake, don't!"

"Well," said Wendell, coldly, "for your sake."

For a moment the two men glared at each other. Then Wendell turned on his heel and left the room.

V

Do not plunge thyself too far in anger,
lest thou hasten thy trial.

—*All's Well that Ends Well.*

WHEN the sound of Wendell's footsteps had died away Ainslee turned toward his wife. She had gone to the window and was looking out at the bleak expanse of the park. Instead of tears, there was a bitter, injured look in her eyes, and her lips were pressed together firmly. Renée Dressler's blow had been so sudden and cruel that in her anger she did not realize the awfulness of her position. But she knew that confidence was dead; that the end had come—the end of everything.

Ainslee watched her for a moment, not daring to break the silence. The trap had been so carefully set, and he had been led into it so cleverly, that he was utterly at a loss for an explanation. But the consciousness that he had done no wrong prompted him to appeal to her sense of justice, with the hope that she would believe the truth.

"Margaret," he said, finally.

She turned and looked him full in the eyes.

"Well?"

Her calmness frightened him.

"How can I explain what you have just seen?" he faltered.

"You needn't explain," she answered. "You may spare yourself the trouble."

"You wouldn't condemn me unheard?" he protested.

"I don't condemn you—you have condemned yourself."

"Don't be unjust," he said, taking a step toward her.

"You have deceived me from the first," she answered, bitterly.

"I have not," he exclaimed. "She was desperate. It was impulse—revenge—God knows what."

"Don't be a coward," she said.

"Don't sacrifice her to save yourself."

"I have a right to protect myself," he protested; "can't you see I am telling the truth?"

"Why lie to me any more?" she replied, turning away wearily. "Does a woman throw herself into a man's arms for nothing?"

"If it were true, if I were her lover," he said, angrily, "I'd be man enough to acknowledge it."

"But I heard—I saw with my own eyes."

For a moment he looked at her reproachfully. "What if I were to doubt your sincerity?" he said, finally. "What if I were to believe what people tell me about you and Wendell?"

With a cry of pain she turned and faced him, her eyes flashing with anger.

"And if it were true, would I be the first woman to seek elsewhere for the love she failed to find at home?"

He seized her hand and drew her toward him. "I know it is only my word against hers—but can't you see it is not true?—that I love you, not her? Will nothing I can say convince you? Does your heart tell you nothing?"

She thought of the words of an hour before, and the lie he had told her.

"My heart?" she laughed; "you had all my heart, all my love—and the chance to prove that I might trust you."

"And you have the chance to make me feel it is worth while to be straight and square—the chance to forgive. Don't throw it away."

With a shudder she drew her hand away. It was not in her heart to forgive.

"You ask too much," she said.

"Some day you may know what it is to suffer. I hope you may."

"You can't go like this," he cried.

"You *must* listen to me."

"What is the use?" she said, disdainfully. "When trust is gone, love is gone. So why pretend?"

Without a word he turned and walked slowly toward the door of his own room; then he stood for a moment on the threshold watching her.

"Margaret!" he cried, impulsively.

She did not answer.

"Not one word? Well, as you will—and God help us both."

When he had gone she looked up suddenly and laughed.

"So this is the end, and my poor little heaven was only a fools' paradise—a miserable house of cards, to tumble over at the merest touch. Oh, it seemed so beautiful to-day." The tears came at last, and she covered her face with her hands and sobbed. But it brought no relief. With a sudden effort she dried her eyes and gazed about the room.

"Well, I shall go on living, I suppose. People never die when the fire is burned out."

Her hand fell upon the table and touched something warm and soft. It was Renée Dressler's muff, and for a moment she stroked it abstractedly; then she held it up before her eyes.

"Her muff!" she said. "Soft and furry, like the owner. B-r-r-r—I can almost hear her purr."

With a quick impulse she seized the muff with both her hands and shook it resentfully. An envelope dropped to the floor and lay there with the address exposed.

"Schuyler's writing!" she exclaimed. Picking up the letter, she tore it quickly from the envelope and read:

"N. W. is going to the country, so meet me at the studio at half-past eleven. The door will be open, so don't ring."

For a moment she sat gazing at the floor. Then, with a start, she crumpled the letter in her hand.

"To-night," she muttered, jumping to her feet. "After the opera—when he says he goes to the club."

For a while she paced the floor, thinking of the events that had brought forth this new insult.

"Fool!" she said; "does he think I will sit here meekly and let this go on?" Then she paused, and placed her hands over her eyes. "Let me think! Let me think!" she muttered. "Yes—yes—I'll do it."

In pursuance of the wild plan she had formed she went to the table and rang the bell; then she smoothed out the letter and placed it carefully in the muff as she had found it.

"Will he lie to me again?" she said, rubbing the fur against her face. "Will he beg and implore forgiveness? Oh, to meet them face to face!"

"Did you ring, madam?" asked the servant who had answered the bell.

"Yes," she answered, quickly. "Take this muff to Mrs. Dressler. There is a letter inside; be careful not to lose it."

"Very good, madam," replied the man.

Margaret walked to the window. It was snowing.

"And I might have been weak enough to forgive!" she said, finally.

Lady Coldstream came into the room. "I say, Margaret," she asked, "isn't it time to dress?"

"I shall not go to the opera to-night," answered Margaret, decidedly.

Lady Coldstream shrugged her shoulders.

PART III

ANOTHER EVENING

I

I were unmannerly to take you out,
And not to kiss you.

—*Henry VIII.*

DICKIE WILLING threw open the door of Norman Wendell's studio so unceremoniously that Eveline entered without a question. His evident familiarity with the premises robbed her of all suspicion, and she had just time to see that she was standing at the top of a short flight of stairs, and that there were vague forms of easels and men in armor beyond, when the hall door closed suddenly behind her, and she was left in Cimmerian obscurity.

"Why, it's dark!" she exclaimed, drawing back in fright.

"Rather," chuckled Dickie. "Let's play going through a tunnel. Bully game for two." Whereupon he promptly kissed her.

"If you do that again I'll scream!" cried Eveline, struggling to free herself.

"Can't," he laughed; "it's against the rules of the game." And in spite of her struggles he kissed her again. However, if the truth must be known, a girl is never kissed twice against her will, even in the dark.

"Stop, Dickie!" she expostulated, with as much indignation as might be expected from a convent-bred young lady who was experiencing a very wicked sensation without the slightest chance of being found out. "If you don't stop, I'll never look at you again."

"Oh, I don't know," laughed the artful Dickie, turning the switch of the electric light. "Ha! Rather

neat, what?" he chuckled, as the lofty study was brought suddenly into view.

For a moment Eveline gazed in bewilderment at the armor, the tapestries and the rare old furniture, gathered from many lands by a lover of the beautiful. Then she realized that a young woman in her position must show some spirit; so, glaring at Dickie resentfully, she walked down the stairs with a haughty tread.

"I'll—I'll never speak to you again," she said, when she felt that a safe distance separated her from her audacious companion.

"Oh, very well, very well. There are others," and Dickie Willing strode into the room with a swagger that gave emphasis to his indifference.

"I suppose you mean Mabel Smythe," said Eveline, with feminine disregard of her threat.

"Didn't say so, did I?"

"I suppose you've kissed her, too?"

"And the girl guessed right the very first time." Whereupon the inconsiderate Dickie proceeded to whistle the refrain of a popular song in which the boy is supposed to do the guessing.

Eveline did not reply. Tossing her head disdainfully, she proceeded to examine a Florentine marriage coffer with the air of a connoisseur, although, as a matter of fact, she thought it must be a coffin or a mummy-case. She began, however, to realize her position. Something must have happened to Lady Coldstream, and there she was, alone in a bachelor's apartments with Dickie Willing.

"Oh, I wish they'd come!" she said, glancing toward the door anxiously. "I knew something would happen."

"Well, it happened all right, all right," answered Dickie, gleefully, tripping toward her in a manner that foreboded evil intent.

"That will do, Mr. Willing," said Eveline, gently but firmly displacing the arm with which he had surrounded her waist. "You know I am here without a chaperon."

"Rather!" chuckled Dickie.

"That's why I embraced the opportunity."

"Mr. Willing," exclaimed Eveline, haughtily, "I am not an opportunity!" Whereupon she withdrew to the farther end of the room and turned her back.

Dickie looked after her disconsolately. "Oh, I *am* enjoying myself," he muttered, as he went to the wall and pushed the electric bell, suiting the action with the words: "Did anyone say drinks?"

But Eveline was in no mood for badinage. She was thoroughly frightened at her predicament and ashamed of her part in the escapade. So she paid no attention to Dickie's efforts to be funny; and he, finding that he was very much out of it, came toward her sorrowfully, and said, in a pleading tone:

"I say, won't you forgive me? I'll be good next time."

Eveline looked at him scornfully.

"Never, so long as I live!"

"Then I hope you'll die young," answered the incorrigible youth.

"Brute!" she cried.

At that moment Wendell's man entered in answer to Dickie's summons, and further hostilities were averted.

"Did you ring, sir?" said the servant, sleepily. Then, seeing Eveline and Dickie, he continued, in evident perplexity: "I beg pardon, sir. I thought it was Mr. Wendell. Shall I tell him you are here, sir?"

"No, Parker, no," answered Dickie, with a prohibitive gesture. "I'm it." Then, swelling his chest to its proudest dimensions, he continued, authoritatively: "We will feast, Parker—on Mr. Wendell. We will drink, Parker—on Mr. Wendell. There will be seven of us without Mr. Wendell—he can wait."

"Very good, sir," was the imperturbable response. But Eveline, who was now becoming thoroughly provoked by Dickie's imbecility, interrupted the proceedings.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough to stop this nonsense," she said to him, "and let the man tell Mr. Wendell we are here."

"Sorry to disoblige a lady," he replied, "but this is a surprise party, and the other surprises have not yet arrived." And, turning to the servant, he continued his commands regardless of Eveline's protests: "Get the chafing dishes ready, Parker—plenty of cold beer and enough whisky and soda to quench my thirst."

Parker's stereotyped reply of "Very good, sir," preceded his exit from the room, and as the door closed behind him, Eveline gave Willing a glance of withering scorn and turned her back; whereupon he went to the piano, and with one finger and a great deal of pains picked out the notes of the familiar song: "There's Only One Girl in this World for Me." This delicate compliment softened the ire of Eveline to the extent of making her glance stealthily over her shoulder at the crafty Dickie, who, seizing this opportunity to display his indifference, pounded out the notes of "There are Other Coons as Warm as You," much to Eveline's disgust and his own merriment.

II

In fair Bohemia.
—*The Winter's Tale.*

WHEN Mrs. Dressler entered the studio a moment later she leaned over the banister to survey the situation. Dickie was pounding the piano with his indefatigable finger, and Eveline was carefully ensconced in a far-away corner, with her back turned upon him and an expression of offended dignity on her pretty face.

"There's a Gibson picture for you," she laughed. "Find the girl who's just been kissed."

However, Nicholas Schuyler, her companion, did not appreciate the persiflage of the situation. Furious at discovering his daughter alone with a man at midnight, he rushed toward Eveline, his face growing redder with every stride.

"Where's Lady Coldstream?" he shouted.

Eveline blushed and tried to stammer an excuse, but Dickie whisked about on his piano stool and manfully entered the breach.

"Oh, don't worry about Lady Coldstream," he drawled. "She's old enough to take care of herself."

"Sir!" hissed Nicholas Schuyler; "wait till you are spoken to."

"Oh, I *am* enjoying myself!" Dickie exclaimed, as he gave his stool another twist and proceeded to finger the notes of "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." Owing to the slowness with which his repertory was mastered, Dickie's music, though expressive, was invariably a season or two behind the times, but he had a *motif* for every occasion ready at hand.

Meanwhile, Nicholas Schuyler strode to and fro, muttering to himself, and Renée Dressler removed her wrap.

"And have you no explanation, Miss?" exclaimed the Knickerbocker, when he could control his choler sufficiently to speak.

"You see, papa," Eveline faltered, "when we left the opera the carriage wasn't there—because it was only the third act—so we took two cabs. Well, Lady Coldstream insisted upon going with Mr. Dressler and sending us ahead. She said they would follow. Well, they must have got lost. Really, papa, I couldn't help it."

"Scandalous! Scandalous!" muttered the old gentleman. "Follow, indeed! Lady Coldstream ought to be ashamed of herself!"

The diatribe was well timed, for at this moment the English beauty descended the stairs.

"I beg pardon," she drawled, languidly, at the mention of her name.

Mr. Schuyler's colors were, however, nailed to the mast. "Yes, scandalous," he repeated, defiantly. "The idea of allowing my daughter to go about New York at this hour of the night alone with a young man. I repeat, madam, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Well, I'm not," said Lady Coldstream, laconically, as Monty Dressler

removed her *sortie de bal*, and she stepped forward in all the radiance of a superbly fitting gown and the famous Coldstream pearls. "Fancy wasting one's time watching a girl! She's sure to catch you asleep sooner or later, and when she does she'll make up for lost time—if she's any sort of a girl."

Seeing that Lady Coldstream was incorrigible, the irate father vented his spleen upon the unfortunate Willing.

"As for you, sir," he said, turning upon him sharply, "I forbid you ever to enter my house again."

"Oh, I *am* enjoying myself," muttered the disconsolate Dickie, as he gave expression to his feelings with the one-fingered monody, "You Can't Play in My Yard," while the angry Knickerbocker turned his back and began to inflict on Monty Dressler a dissertation upon the duties of the modern parent. He had brought Eveline up, as he assured Monty, uncontaminated by the world, and, gracious though he was by nature, his temper was uncontrollable toward those who sought to infect his daughter with the poisonous influences of modern society.

"What made you so late?" asked Renée Dressler of Lady Coldstream, with the commendable desire of relieving the situation.

"Why, that beast of a cabman got lost—took us 'way to Central Park."

"Fancy getting lost with Monty!" said Mrs. Dressler, sympathetically. Lady Coldstream smiled.

"I don't believe you appreciate Monty. He got quite forward in the cab."

"I know," mused Mrs. Dressler. "A husband is like an umbrella—when you lose him always suspect a friend."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the English beauty. "When Coldstream got lost I always suspected——"

"Careful," interrupted Monty, who was listening with one ear. "Youthful innocence is with us."

"Oh, I'm not so innocent," protested Eveline.

"Yes, Eveline's getting on," Lady Coldstream said, with a knowing look.

"But, I say, where's Mr. Wendell?"

"Puzzle: Find the man who's giving the party," queried Mrs. Dressler, with a glance about the studio.

"He isn't giving the party," laughed Lady Coldstream. "I'm giving the party—the joke's on him."

"Oh, I see. When you asked me I thought it rather strange."

"The sinners are here, Mr. Willing. But where is the publican? I, for one, am thirsty," said Lady Coldstream, turning to Dickie.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered, with a meaning look at Eveline. "I wasn't looking for Wendell."

"If you dare tell," expostulated Eveline, with evident fright.

"Oh, I *was* enjoying myself," Dickie chuckled to himself.

"Well, find him, silly," interrupted Lady Coldstream, sharply. Whereupon Dickie ambled leisurely toward the door of Norman Wendell's bedroom, and rapping loudly, called, in imitation of the falsetto tones of Bertie Beacher: "Wake up, Dobbs; you're wanted!"

The mandate, however, brought no response, so Dickie rapped again—in vain.

"Open the door," suggested Mrs. Dressler.

"Can't—it's locked," answered Dickie, after a vigorous rattling of the door-knob.

"Rather suspicious," said Lady Coldstream. "These artists, you know."

Dickie pounded again in a manner to wake the dead, and at last the response: "Hello! Who's there?" came faintly through the door.

"We want you," called Lady Coldstream.

"We want supper," shouted Dickie Willing.

"Wait," was the muffled rejoinder, "I'll be out in a minute."

So the besiegers awaited the capitulation, and meanwhile Nicholas Schuyler vociferated his opinion to the long-suffering Monty.

"I tell you," he exclaimed, "society

is going to the dogs. The young girls know everything, and the married women do everything."

"Rather," chuckled Monty. "It's no longer a privilege to be a man."

"In my day, women were women."

"And men were brutes," interrupted Lady Coldstream. "Just as they are now."

The Knickerbocker's glance was intended to convey contempt, but as Lady Coldstream only laughed he felt it had been futile, so he turned on his heel and went to the window seat, where he ensconced himself in a comfortable corner and went to sleep, with the firm conviction that he was justified in maintaining that society *was* going to the dogs when such vulgar creatures as Lady Coldstream were its representatives.

The bolts were withdrawn at last, and Norman Wendell, with a sleepy, disheveled appearance, came into the room and rubbed his eyes.

"Well," he said, "you people seem to have taken possession."

"Rather," growled Dickie Willing. "Couldn't find anything else worth taking."

"To whom am I indebted for this surprise party?" Wendell continued, looking about at the friends who had so calmly possessed themselves of his studio.

"To me," replied Lady Coldstream, quite unabashed. "You looked so bored at the opera I thought you needed cheering up a bit."

"Yes; I couldn't stand but two acts, so came home early. I was reading, and must have fallen asleep."

"Do you always lock the door when you read?" asked Mrs. Dressler, pertinently.

"Yes. When the fellows next door get thirsty they make a raid. I don't mind their helping themselves, but I do object to being routed out."

"You were so long about opening the door," suggested Dressler, with a knowing look, "that we thought perhaps you were not alone."

"That *would* have been a surprise party," laughed Lady Coldstream.

"Nothing so interesting," said

Wendell. "I was merely asleep in a beautiful pink dressing-gown—nothing worse. But how about supper?"

"Oh, I've ordered supper, all right, all right," was Dickie's reassuring response. "Think I'll see how it's coming on." Whereupon he made a hasty exit in the direction of the dining-room.

"Well, I suppose you're all here," said Wendell, with an effort to view the situation as cheerfully as possible.

"Margaret's ill, but Schuyler said he'd come," answered Lady Coldstream, arranging the cushions on the divan to support her back. "Didn't act as though he wanted to, though."

"I hesitated myself about coming," said Renée Dressler, in a voice modulated for Wendell's ear alone; "but Lady Coldstream insisted. Are you surprised?"

"After this afternoon, your hesitation, not your coming, is the surprise," answered Wendell, coldly.

Renée Dressler looked at him intently. "Come, don't be nasty," she said. "We're both playing the same game."

Wendell turned away in disgust, unwilling to honor such an insinuation with a reply.

"Why didn't you keep your word?" she asked, quickly.

"My word?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes. In the old days, when you said you were going to the country you usually went."

There was a photograph of Margaret on the ledge of an old Spanish cabinet near by. Mrs. Dressler picked up the picture and looked at it. "But the attractions of New York were not so great then," she said, as she replaced the photograph.

"I am not aware that my actions concern you," he answered, shortly.

"Possibly not. But suppose I had counted on your going. It might have been very embarrassing, don't you see?"

Wendell looked at her in amazement. Her audacity was beyond his comprehension. "Have you no conscience whatever?" he asked.

Renée Dressler laughed. "Fancy having a conscience in New York! Conscience is only the fear of being found out, and so many people are found out nowadays that Mrs. Ferry Dobbs no longer considers it a novelty worthy of a dinner."

"Mrs. Dressler," said Wendell, calmly, "you are my guest. I can say nothing now."

"But to-morrow," she thought, as he walked away, "he will tell the lady everything; and then, with the letter as corroborative evidence—well, we shall see."

Dickie Willing appeared in the door of the dining-room armed with a huge glass of whiskey-and-soda and a sandwich. "Oh, I am enjoying myself," he murmured, as he drained his glass; but he was alone in his contentment.

"I say," yawned Monty Dressler. "Isn't this party rather slow?"

The statement was not polite, but it expressed the boredom of the party. Wendell, in the rôle of compulsory host, felt compelled to relieve the situation of some of its monotony. So he went to Eveline and asked her to play something.

"Yes," exclaimed Lady Coldstream. "One of those nigger things."

Eveline took the seat at the piano and rattled off "A Georgia Camp Meeting," while Dickie Willing, inspired by the rag-time music, seized Renée Dressler's hand, and together they performed a sprightly cake walk to the accompaniment of clapping hands.

Ainslee entered quietly just as the merriment was at its height.

"Well, you all seem pretty festive," he said, as he removed his coat.

"You're just in time," called Monty Dressler. "The performance is only half-over."

"And after the performance," shouted Dickie, "remember the concert in the adjoining tent. Tickets only ten cents. Gentlemanly ushers will now pass among you!"

Someone started a popular chorus, and as Parker threw back the portière

of the dining-room Wendell mounted a chair and called forth the welcome announcement of: "Supper is now ready in the dining-car."

"Tag—you're it," said Dickie, giving Renée Dressler a parting shove in the direction of a huge chair, into which she fell, panting for breath after the exertions in the cake walk, while Monty Dressler seized Eveline's hand and dragged her away, shouting: "Come on, Miss Innocence."

Wendell meanwhile descended from his point of vantage, and, extending his arm to Lady Coldstream, invited her to "Come and help feed the animals."

"Rather," exclaimed the beauty. "I'm a bit peckish—but I say," she continued, looking about the room, "where's Mr. Schuyler?"

"Behold the sleeping beauty," laughed Mrs. Dressler, pointing to the window seat, where the courtly scion of old New York was dozing sweetly, with mouth wide open and accompanying noises dangerously approximating snores.

"I say, Uncle Nicholas, wake up!" said Ainslee, shaking him.

"Why—why, what's the matter?" grunted the slumberer, as he opened his eyes in a dazed sort of way and gazed about him.

"Supper—champagne!" called Lady Coldstream.

"No—beer," protested Wendell. "We're in Bohemia now."

"Aye," muttered the sexagenarian, as Ainslee assisted him to his feet. "Bohemia, the land of the free and the home of the beautiful. Oh, you artists!" he continued, giving Wendell a friendly slap on the back. "Always jolly dogs. Perhaps you think I am too old to be young. Come, lead the way. I'm game for anything."

Like a schoolboy in his teens he capered merrily to the dining-room, followed by Lady Coldstream and the host, while a salvo of popping corks announced that Dickie Willing had discovered that champagne was not unknown in the wilds of electric-lighted Bohemia.

III

She is too subtle for thee.

—*As You Like It.*

RENÉE DRESSLER had purposely stepped aside to let Lady Coldstream pass. By this manœuvre she succeeded in barring Ainslee's way to the dining-room.

"Well," she said, the moment they were alone. "Have you nothing to say to me?"

Her attitude was penitent, and for a moment he stared at her in surprise, unable to reconcile this humble pose with her conduct of the afternoon.

"Nothing you would care to hear," he said, turning away abruptly.

She went toward him and held out her hands appealingly. "Then you refuse to forgive?" she pleaded.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "how can I? It was so heartless—so indecent!"

Renée bowed her head submissively. "Because I ask it," she said, "from the bottom of my heart. Can I do more?"

"You can go to my wife and tell her the truth."

She started angrily, then checked herself. In a moment she was all humility again. "And if I do as you ask?" she said. "If I go to her and humiliate myself for—for your sake? What then?"

"I may forgive," he answered, coldly. "But it would be hard—even then."

"How can you be so cruel?" she cried. "So unjust—here, in this room! If you had any heart you would remember."

"I remember only too well. The first taste of love is sweet enough—the bitterness lies in the dregs."

He was thinking of the time when he shared the studio with Wendell, and the painting of her portrait made her coming possible in the eyes of the world, in spite of the many days when the canvas was untouched. Unconsciously he glanced toward the window-seat, and she knew he was thinking of the moments they had passed together.

"Ah, you do remember! I knew you could not forget."

Norman Wendell came into the studio to find them. He saw her place a hand upon Ainslee's shoulder, and he drew back quickly. He had no wish to play the eavesdropper, but he could not help hearing her say, in a way that made him shudder at the thought of Margaret: "Why are the others here? Why are we not alone? We might have been."

Ainslee looked into her eyes, and his pulses throbbed with the mad longing to hold her in his arms.

"See," she whispered close to his face. "There is where we used to sit. Think, dear, of the old times."

For one brief moment he hesitated. Then, with a sudden realization of her treachery, he drew back in fear and anger.

"Do you honestly think you can trick me again?" he exclaimed.

"Why won't you believe me?" she said, with an injured look.

"Because you taught me unbelief," he answered, taking a step toward the dining-room.

She looked at him curiously, then turned away with a sigh. "And you think I do not care," she said, bitterly. "How little a man ever knows of a woman's heart!"

"A woman's heart," he muttered, "a Chinese puzzle, not worth the solving."

"I ought to hate you!" she exclaimed. "I have tried hard to hate you, but—I can't. God knows it has been bitter—it is always the woman who suffers."

"Then be generous to her," he said.

"Do you think she cares?" Renée queried, significantly. "She has her Norman Wendell."

"Stop!" he commanded. "Not another word."

"You shall listen," she said, angrily. "Why, to-day I saw him holding her hand and kissing it. I heard him tell her that he loved her."

"I need better evidence than your word," he responded.

"What! When the whole world

knows it? Come! be a man—take your revenge.”

“And reap the whirlwind? No, thank you.” He turned away, but she seized his hand in both her own and drew him toward her.

“Must I tell you in so many words?” she cried. “Can’t you see? Don’t you understand? I love you!”

Ainslee stared at her in amazement. He could not believe she was serious. Was it a new trick—a clever play to entrap him again? She looked up tenderly and met his eyes.

“You said it must be all or nothing,” she whispered, passionately. “Well?”

“Then let it be nothing,” he said, gruffly, releasing his hand and drawing away from her quickly.

“Coward!” she cried.

He could only pity a woman who would so demean herself. “Don’t you see it is too late?” he said.

In a moment of wild passion she had abandoned herself to him—for she loved him, in a morbid, frenzied way, because he belonged to another, because she could no longer trample him under her feet at will.

“It is not too late!” she exclaimed. “I love you! Do you hear? I love you—and you love me!”

Contempt drove the pity from Ainslee’s heart. “I do not love you,” he declared. “I love my wife. Now do you understand?”

The old tantalizing look came into her eyes. She was herself again—cold, cynical, mysterious.

“So you think I am serious?” she laughed. “You think I’m sentimental, and really care for you! You did not see through my little comedy? Well, I was acting a part. And your wife is acting a part, too. You don’t see through that, either. She was jealous of me, wasn’t she? And she made you feel like a brute, didn’t she? And you got down on your knees and groveled, and she told you she would never trust you again. And you, poor fool, loved her all the more. Well, watch her, I say—and watch your friend, Mr. Norman Wendell.”

Ainslee looked at her curiously.

“Renée,” he said, “you are the devil.”

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Women are generally what men make them.”

“I say, Mrs. Dressler,” said Dickie, as he and Wendell appeared in the door of the dining-room, “is Schuyler so fascinating you can’t eat?”

“Fascinating?” laughed Renée. “He was telling me about his domestic bliss. I suppose when he has children his one topic of conversation will be little Schuyler’s parlor tricks.”

“Well, if that’s the case,” said Dickie, holding back the portière for her to pass, “you must be driven to drink.”

Ainslee started to follow. “One moment,” said Wendell, stopping before him.

“Well?” asked Ainslee, harshly.

“I was there just now,” answered Wendell, pointing to the door. “It was quite by accident, but I couldn’t help hearing something.”

“Then I’m sorry you didn’t hear more,” Ainslee replied, taking a step toward the door.

“I heard enough, and I saw enough,” Wendell said, angrily, barring his way again. “Do you expect me to let this go on without a protest?”

Ainslee turned toward him quickly, his face pale with anger. “Since when have I become accountable to you?” he growled.

“Since that night at your uncle’s, when you gave me your word this affair would stop.”

“See here, Wendell,” cried Ainslee, “I refuse to be answerable for my conduct to anyone but my wife, least of all to you, when you make it your business to play the spy.”

Wendell, remembering his guests, checked his impulse to continue the controversy. “Ainslee,” he said, “I have played fair from the start, but you have broken your word. I owe you nothing now. I give you fair warning—it is you against me.”

“Then let the best man win,” hotly replied Ainslee, as he turned and left the room.

IV

I do suffer love, indeed, for I love thee against my will.

—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

For a year Norman Wendell's life had been inspired by the feeling that Margaret's happiness had been realized, and that, come what might, he had acted an honorable part. His love, however, was not a momentary passion or sentimental fancy that time might cure, for men such as he seldom love but once. He had suffered cheerfully because he believed that Margaret had married the man she cared for most. But now, as he stood there alone, after the stormy interview with Ainslee, and realized that her happiness was ended, a wild thought flashed through his mind: Margaret's duty to her husband was ended. His own love would make her forget what she had suffered.

The consequences? He did not stop to consider them. But, inspired by the impulse of the moment, he went to the Spanish cabinet, and taking up her picture, gazed at it long and earnestly.

"Poor girl," he thought, "and what of you? You chose between us once—and now?"

The hall door was opened softly, and Margaret stole down the stairs into the studio. With a frightened look she glanced nervously about the room. An unfinished canvas standing upon the easel separated her from Wendell, and she did not see him. She was in street dress and wore a thick veil. A fur cape hung loosely about her shoulders. Hearing laughter, she crept cautiously toward the dining-room. Dickie Willing's voice broke forth in comic song, and she drew back quickly. The fur cape dropped from her shoulders and lay upon the floor.

The song aroused Wendell from his reverie. Replacing the picture where he had found it, he turned and saw her standing there.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed.

"Norman!" she said, with a start, "you here?"

"Yes. What does this mean?"

She glanced toward the dining-room. "Hush," she whispered, "they must not know."

Wendell went to the door and closed it quietly. "Tell me," he asked, coming toward her again, "why are you here?"

"I—I thought you were at Westbury," she faltered.

"I didn't go. Mrs. Egerton wired me she was ill. But why did you come—if—if you thought I was not here?"

Margaret hesitated. "I—I expected—" she said, finally. "Oh, it's nothing. I was mistaken."

The laughter and applause that greeted Dickie's song came faintly through the door. "Why are those people here?" she said.

"It was Lady Coldstream's idea—a sort of surprise party."

"Is Mrs. Dressler there?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"And my husband?"

"Yes."

Margaret paced the floor excitedly. "Did he know you weren't at Westbury?" she asked.

"Lady Coldstream must have told him."

"You did not expect them?" she said, looking at him searchingly. "You knew nothing about their coming?"

"Absolutely nothing," he answered in amazement. "But why do you ask me these questions? What does it mean? Surely you can trust me."

She came toward him quickly. "There's no one else I can trust," she replied, with a sigh. "Oh, how can I tell you? This afternoon—" her eyes flashed angrily, and she pressed her lips together—"after you were gone, I found a letter from Schuyler—she left it in her muff. It told her to meet him here to-night."

"Here?" he exclaimed. "Did you think I could lend myself to that?"

"I did not stop to think—I only wanted to meet them face to face. Oh, you don't know what it is to be jealous—this mad beating of the heart

—and all the furies of hell dancing before your eyes and screaming in your ears!”

“Yes, yes,” said Wendell, impatiently. “But the letter! Have you the letter?”

“No,” she answered, removing her veil mechanically and folding it carefully, without thought of what she was doing. “I sent it back—in the muff. I did not want her to know I had seen it. But I remember every word of it. ‘N. W. is going to the country. Meet me at the studio at 11.30. The door will be open, so do not ring.’” She looked up with misty eyes. “Now do you understand?” she asked.

Wendell did not reply. He was recalling the events of the day and trying to fit together the different bits of evidence. “Oh, I see it all,” he finally exclaimed, clenching his hands together angrily.

“You believe it is true?” she asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “Shall I tell you why?”

“Why not? It is only a little more to bear.”

“Schuyler knew I was going to the country—I told him yesterday—and he has a key to the studio.”

“A key?” she exclaimed, in astonishment.

“Yes. You know before you married we shared these rooms; he had one then—he has never given it back. They used to meet here when I was painting her portrait.”

An injured look came into her eyes. “And you did not tell me!” she said, reproachfully. “You let me marry him.”

“How could I tell you,” he protested, “when I knew you loved him? If I had, you would not have believed me.”

“No,” she answered, thoughtfully, “a woman must see with her own eyes before she will believe.”

But Wendell did not hear. He was thinking of Ainslee’s perfidy. “That night,” he continued, “when he asked you to marry him, he gave me his word it was ended.”

“Go on,” she said.

“To-night she had the impertinence to insinuate that I upset their plans, and I overheard her say to him: ‘Why are we not here alone, as we might have been?’”

“Yes, yes, I see.” She put her hands to her eyes wearily. “The letter—the key—her words.”

“Forgive me for telling you,” he said, feelingly. “I have only made it the harder for you.”

“It was your duty to tell me. It has been harder for you, too, but I had to know some time.”

There was a moment of silence, when each waited for the other to speak. Finally Margaret put out her hand. “Good-bye,” she said, with an effort. Wendell took her hand and pressed it to his lips.

“And you, Margaret,” he asked, “what will you do?”

She released her hand and stood gazing at the floor. “Oh, I shall go on living somehow,” she answered, with a sigh.

“He will insult you every day that you live!” cried Wendell. “Think, Margaret, think what that means!”

She looked at him reproachfully. “Would you have me acknowledge that I have been beaten—humiliated by her? No, no. That I will never do—never. When I came here to-night my one thought was to expose them to the world. But what would that mean? A scandal—a divorce—my name dragged through the courts.”

She turned away to go. She wished to be free to think. The air stifled her.

“You won’t go back to him?” he cried. “You want to do that?”

“Why not?” she asked, shrugging her shoulders indifferently, as though her future mattered little now.

With a sudden impulse Wendell caught both her hands and held them tightly. “Because I love you,” he said, looking into her eyes passionately. “Do you hear? I love you! Don’t sacrifice my love again. You owe him nothing—absolutely nothing.”

“I am still his wife,” she said. “Is that nothing?”

"No!" he exclaimed. "You are free! He has broken every promise; he has flaunted his infidelity in your face!"

With a startled cry she drew away.

"Do you mean—? No, you can't mean that!"

"I love you!" he repeated. "I love you with all my soul—with all my life! There has never been a moment when I have not loved you!"

"Stop! stop!" she said, covering her face with her hands. "Are you mad?"

"Yes—mad!" he exclaimed, forcibly seizing her in his arms. "I have waited all my life, and now you are mine!"

She heard laughter and the clinking of glasses. "Let me go!" she cried, struggling to release herself. "Let me go—they will hear!"

"Let them hear! Let the whole world hear!"

He took her by each shoulder and held her away so that he could look into her eyes.

"No, no," he said, "I can't lose you again."

Margaret gazed at him in absolute amazement. She could not believe this man was the quiet, long-suffering friend she had always trusted. "You don't know what you are asking," she pleaded. "Let me go! Wait! Wait until to-morrow!"

"Until to-morrow," he reiterated, with a vague, hopeless look, his hands dropping despondently to his side.

"We want Normy Wendell," came all at once from the chorus of voices in the other room.

"Oh, if they see me!" she cried, in fright.

Renée Dressler opened the door.

"Leave it to me," she said, standing in the doorway and talking to the people in the dining-room. "I will find him."

"That woman!" gasped Margaret. "Quick!" she cried, seizing Wendell's arm and looking about with terror.

"Where can I go?"

For a moment Wendell stood dazed; then, suddenly realizing the danger, he dragged her to his bedroom, just as

Renée Dressler turned and stepped into the studio.

"Normy must have a girl there, after all," called Dickie Willing through the open door.

"Then I'll find the girl," laughed Renée, as Wendell closed the portière with a jerk and placed himself before it.

V

We have caught her, madam.

—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

RENÉE DRESSLER walked slowly about the studio, humming a tune. Casting an occasional critical glance at the sketches that adorned the wall, she managed in the course of time to edge her way toward the door where Wendell was standing guard.

"Very clumsy, Mr. Wendell," she said, smiling. "If you did not wish me to be suspicious, you should have drawn the portière gently and walked away. Who is she?"

"She?" said Wendell, with an effort to conceal his agitation. "There is no 'she,' that I am aware of."

Renée Dressler laughed outright; then she looked him full in the eyes. "There is a woman in that room," she declared. "What is the use of pretending there is not?"

Her attack was so sudden that for a moment he could find no words to reply. "Really," he stammered at last, "you are mistaken, I assure you."

"Then it won't be indiscreet for me to get my handkerchief," she said, naively, taking a step toward the bedroom. "I left it in my cloak."

Now thoroughly alarmed and alive to the situation, Wendell recovered himself quickly. "Pardon me," he answered, with a gesture toward an old settle by the stairs where the wraps of the party had been left. "Your cloak is there. Shall I get it?"

"If you will be so considerate." He moved toward the settle. The moment his back was turned she tiptoed stealthily in the direction of the bedroom. Wendell, suspecting her stratagem, wheeled about suddenly.

"Pardon me again," he said, approaching her quickly, "that is my bedroom."

"Eh?" she laughed. "That doesn't frighten me."

"You might at least wait for an invitation," he replied, pointedly.

"Mr. Wendell, there is a woman in that room," she said. "She was there when we came. I advise you to take me into your confidence."

He looked her steadily in the eyes; then he laughed.

"How very clever you are! Well, to be frank, there *is* a woman there—a friend of mine—a—a model. You see I did not expect visitors to-night."

She gave a little cry of fright and turned away quickly, covering her eyes with her hand. "Oh, how shocking!" she laughed. "Do let me see her. If she's like most models she's used to being seen."

"But she's a lady!" he exclaimed.

"Oh!" said Renée, quickly.

"I mean she's not exactly the ordinary model." Wendell was growing desperate. "Come, play fair," he pleaded. "You might be sportsman enough to give me a chance to get her out."

Renée shrugged her shoulders. Then she turned toward a sketch from the nude which stood against the wall.

"Is that the model?" she asked. "If so, I should call her a model of impropriety."

Wendell quietly leaned against the doorpost and folded his arms. "Well, if you insist upon being so disagreeable," he said, resignedly, "I suppose I must make the best of it. But here I stay until you go."

"Oh, very well," she said. "If you don't mind, I'm sure I don't." With exasperating persistency she prepared for the siege by suppressing a yawn. Then she hummed another tune and beat time with her fingers on the table. Suddenly her eyes rested on Margaret's cloak lying on the floor.

"Very pretty," she said, stooping and picking it up.

Wendell felt the color mounting to his cheeks.

"Shouldn't mind having it myself," she continued, holding the cloak up and glancing at it admiringly. "Do models always wear Russian sable capes?" she asked, with an innocent look, as she laid the cape carefully on a chair. "Rather expensive for you painters, I should think."

Before he could reply Lady Coldstream and Ainslee entered the room.

"Oh, there you are!" exclaimed Lady Coldstream. "'Pon my word, Mr. Wendell, you are casual—rum sort of host to desert your guests completely. When I give you another surprise party——"

"Oh, don't blame Mr. Wendell," interrupted Renée Dressler. "He's been very much occupied with a delightful model."

"A model!" cried Lady Coldstream.

"Yes," said Renée, with a glance of triumph at Wendell. "You remember our suspicions—the locked door—the pink dressing gown? Well——"

"Mrs. Dressler, I beg you," protested Wendell.

"Mr. Wendell was at that moment engaged," she continued, regardless of the interruption—"very much engaged, I take it—with the model for his new picture."

"What picture?" asked Lady Coldstream, wondering at Wendell's apparent discomfiture.

"The one with which he intends to astonish us all," Renée continued. "Something very French—a wife surprised by her husband. 'The Day of Reckoning,' I think you will call it, Mr. Wendell," she added, with a meaning smile.

"Really, Lady Coldstream," cried Wendell, in despair. "Mrs. Dressler is drawing upon her imagination."

"Hardly," Renée contradicted. "The picture I refer to is a study from real life, so it will prove most instructive to husbands." She looked at Ainslee. "To you in particular, Schuyler," she added, insinuatingly.

Ainslee, who had been listening rather indifferently, looked up in astonishment.

"I fail to see the humor of all this," he said.

"Possibly," laughed Renée. "But if you will persuade Mr. Wendell to open a certain door, I think you will see the humor of the situation."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Merely that your wife is in Mr. Wendell's bedroom."

"My wife?" he exclaimed.

"Ainslee, that is not true," cried Wendell, desperately.

"*O lé, O la!*" caroled Mrs. Dressler, deprecatingly. "I never lie," she went on, pointing to the door, "when it is so easy to prove the truth."

Ainslee strode forward. "Wendell," he demanded, "is my wife in that room?"

Wendell looked him full in the face.

"No, she is not!" he said, sullenly.

"Then prove it."

"Is not my word sufficient?"

"Not against mine," interrupted Renée, defiantly.

For a moment the two men stood rigidly face to face. Nicholas Schuyler and Dressler came into the room and looked wonderingly from one to the other, not understanding the meaning of it all. Finally Ainslee, his face paling with anger, stepped toward Wendell.

"Wendell," he said, "open that door."

Wendell did not move. "I will not," he muttered, his face flushing hotly. "There is someone there—it is not Mrs. Ainslee. You can't compel me to compromise a woman."

Mrs. Dressler quietly picked up Margaret's cape and came toward Ainslee. "Not when the lady has already compromised herself?" she said, holding the cape before his eyes.

"Margaret's!" he gasped. Then with an imprecation he advanced upon Wendell menacingly.

"Stand back!" he exclaimed.

"Never," said the artist, planting himself firmly before the door.

"By God, you shall!" cried Ainslee, seizing Wendell roughly by the arm and pushing him against the wall. The two men grappled, and Wendell

struggled desperately to hold his ground; but Ainslee was by sheer weight forcing him gradually from the door, when the portière was thrown back and Margaret walked calmly into the room.

VI

Grim and comfortless despair.

—*Comedy of Errors.*

AINSLEE's hands dropped mechanically to his side. For a moment he stood gazing at his wife, completely bewildered. Her manner was so composed and defiant that even Renée Dressler was taken aback, while poor Wendell stared at her as though she were an apparition from the lower world.

"Margaret!" Ainslee gasped, when he had recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to speak.

"Why not?" she answered, coldly.

"Does it surprise you?"

"Oh, dear, no," interrupted Renée Dressler quickly. "One can never be surprised at anything nowadays."

Ainslee turned toward Wendell. "You shall answer for this," he said.

"When we settle accounts," replied Wendell, sternly, "the balance won't be on your side."

Nicholas Schuyler stepped between them. "Enough of this!" he commanded. "Let her explain. I, for one, refuse to believe Margaret Ainslee ever did anything wrong."

"The lady is caught," sneered Renée Dressler, "in her admirer's room. Is any explanation necessary?"

"And you dare say that!" cried Margaret, her eyes glowing with anger. "*You!*"

"Certainly," answered Renée, with a mock curtsy. "Can you deny it? Have we no eyes?"

"Isn't your anxiety to convict rather keen for a disinterested party?" interrupted Lady Coldstream. "How does this affair concern you?"

"Oh, merely as a friend of the family," returned Renée, with a deprecatory shrug.

"Well, deliver me from such a friend!" said Lady Coldstream, in disgust.

Ainslee turned toward his wife. "Margaret," he asked, his voice trembling as he spoke, "have you no explanation?"

"Yes," she answered, quickly, "if I choose to give it."

"My dear," interrupted Lady Coldstream, "remember the position you are in."

Margaret did not reply. For a moment she looked her husband full in the eyes.

"For God's sake, say something!" he said.

"I will," she answered, scornfully. "But remember that for your sake I was willing to be silent."

"For my sake?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I came here to meet you—and *her*. Now do you understand?"

Ainslee stared at her in astonishment. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that I saw your letter."

"Not a word!" whispered Renée aside to her husband. Dressler nodded knowingly.

"Have I said enough?" Margaret continued, "or shall I go on?"

"Go on, go on," Ainslee exclaimed—"if you know what you are talking about."

"Oh, you know what I mean," she said, angrily. "I found the letter you wrote Mrs. Dressler, telling her to meet you to night. How unfortunate that N. W. did not go to the country!"

"Are you crazy?" he gasped, utterly unable to understand her meaning.

"Ask Mrs. Dressler where she left her muff this afternoon. The letter was in it, and I read it."

Nicholas Schuyler stepped forward quickly. "Schuyler," he said, angrily, "if this is true——"

"I tell you it isn't true," protested Ainslee, indignantly. "I have not written to Mrs. Dressler since my marriage. I came here, as you know, at Lady Coldstream's invitation."

"Oh! oh!" cried Margaret. "How dare you say that?"

"Very clever, Mrs. Ainslee," said Renée Dressler. "Very well acted. But where is the letter?"

Margaret gave her enemy a withering glance. "You know perfectly well where it is," she answered.

Renée Dressler smiled. "My dear Mrs. Ainslee, since you see fit to accuse me in order to save yourself, I must tell you that you do not speak the truth. I have never, as your husband says, received any letter from him since his marriage."

Margaret grew very pale. "That is a lie!" she exclaimed.

Lady Coldstream seized Margaret's arm. "Margaret," she pleaded, "stop! You don't know what you are saying."

"I do know," she answered, slowly. "I say again that it's a lie."

Mrs. Dressler turned to Ainslee. "I appeal to you, Mr. Ainslee, to defend me," she implored.

Ainslee controlled his anger sufficiently to speak calmly. "Before you accuse others," he said to his wife, "remember your own position. You said you were too ill to leave the house, and I find you, alone, in the room of a man who was in love with you. I know positively he did not expect visitors. What is more, he denied you were there, and tried forcibly to prevent my finding you. Instead of explaining, you make ridiculous accusations which you cannot substantiate."

Margaret gazed at her husband in utter bewilderment. She could not believe he would be so base as to sacrifice her to save himself.

Wendell had been listening, attentively, fully resolved to assume the blame if the opportunity presented itself. From his point of view the entire affair was a conspiracy between Renée Dressler and Ainslee to compromise Margaret in order that suspicion might be diverted from themselves. This miserable cowardice was more than he could bear in silence.

"You know perfectly well why she is here," he said, suddenly, to Ainslee. "If you are coward enough to

protect yourself at her expense, I am not. You want me to acknowledge it, do you, so that you can go scot free? Very well, then; I do love your wife."

"Damn you!" responded Ainslee, hoarsely.

Nicholas Schuyler stepped before his nephew. "Stop, Schuyler," he warned; "you only demean yourself."

Margaret looked at Wendell hopelessly. "Norman," she uttered, in despair, "what have you said? What have you done?"

"The only thing possible."

She believed he had compromised her intentionally, to make the rupture with her husband complete. With a cry of pain she turned to Ainslee. "No! No!" she exclaimed; "it is not true. I tell you I am innocent!"

Ainslee turned his back without replying. In desperation she seized Nicholas Schuyler's arm. "You don't believe! Tell him you don't believe!"

"You have disgraced us all," Nicholas Schuyler said, coldly. "I am sorry that I lived to see it."

Wendell held out his arms appealingly. "Margaret," he said in a tone of despair.

"Don't speak to me!" she cried. "I hate you!"

He stared at her in dismay. She had killed the one hope that made life tolerable.

Nicholas Schuyler laid his arm gently upon his nephew's shoulder and led him slowly toward the door. "My poor boy!" he said. "My poor boy!"

When they had gone, Margaret staggered toward a chair and sank down, crushed and humiliated. The revenge of Renée Dressler had been complete.

Lady Coldstream took Margaret's hand quietly. "I never went back on a pal yet," she whispered, "and I won't begin now."

Margaret glanced up with a wild, appealing look, and pressed Lady Coldstream's hand gratefully to her heart.

"A very successful surprise party!" said Renée Dressler, cheerfully. "Lady Coldstream, I congratulate you!"

PART IV

ONE MORNING

I

You speak like a green girl.

—*Hamlet*.

WHEN Lady Coldstream entered the library, on the following morning, her usually imperturbable disposition was visibly ruffled. Her first action was to ring the bell; then she walked to the table, and, taking up a morning paper, glanced over its columns nervously.

"Is it in the papers?" she said, half-aloud. "Just like that Dressler woman to give it out!" Her eyes rested on a glaring headline. "Oh, I say," she exclaimed. "'Scandal in High Life—Rumors of a Divorce.'" After quickly scanning the article, she put the paper down with a sigh of relief. "No," she continued, "some other woman. Pretty, of course. The only consolation plain women have is being virtuous."

"Did your ladyship ring?" asked the servant who answered the bell.

"Yes," she said, unfolding another paper with the thought that possibly its news-gatherers were more enterprising than those of the journal she had just inspected. "Is your master back yet?"

"No, my Lady," replied the servant, with uncompromising gravity. "'E slept at the club. Horders came just now for the valet to take his things there."

"Oh!" said Lady Coldstream, with an inflection that might mean a great many things. "Has your mistress had breakfast?"

"Yes, my Lady, but I'm afraid she's hill. The tray came down just now with nothink touched."

Lady Coldstream continued to scan the columns of her paper. After a moment's hesitation, the man made so

bold as to interrupt. "I beg pardon, my Lady," he said, apologetically, "but the lady's maid say the mistress do look 'orrible pale. Hought I to send for the doctor?"

"No," answered Lady Coldstream, with the domineering tone the English employ toward servants. "You may go."

"Very good, my Lady."

"Fancy sending for a doctor!" she laughed, when the man had disappeared. "A lawyer would be more to the point."

Lady Coldstream was not alone in her anxiety, for Eveline presently bustled into the room with an air of great excitement. She carried a large basket filled with envelopes stamped and addressed, which she was bearing hastily in the direction of the hall, when Lady Coldstream hailed her.

"I say, what's all that?" asked the English beauty, eyeing the basket of notes suspiciously.

"Don't bother me," answered Eveline, in a tone of great importance. "I'm recalling the invitations for the dance."

"What!" exclaimed Lady Coldstream, dropping her paper in astonishment. "Who told you to do that?"

"My own intelligence," replied the girl, with a defiant toss of her head. "You couldn't expect Cousin Margaret to consider such details after the scandal of last night?"

"Scandal! Child! there hasn't been any scandal."

"Oh, indeed!" answered Eveline, testily. "The wife is discovered by the husband in the rooms of her lover. If that isn't a scandal, what is?"

Lady Coldstream gasped for breath. "Well, 'pon my word!" she exclaimed, when she had recovered from her astonishment. "For little Miss Innocent, fresh from a convent, you're doing rather well."

"Of course, there'll be a duel," said Eveline, continuing her progress toward the hall. "How romantic! Quite like a French novel."

Lady Coldstream stepped forward and barred Eveline's route of egress.

"And what do you know about French novels, pray?" she asked.

"Oh, I've read a lot," answered Eveline, triumphantly. "A girl needs to know everything nowadays if she wants to get on."

"What you need is a good spanking."

Eveline glared at her resentfully. "You seem to forget I'm out," she exclaimed, drawing herself up to the commanding height of five feet three.

"Well," muttered Lady Coldstream, "you'd better go in again and stay in till you're ripe. As for these," she continued, taking the basket of notes from Eveline's hands, "I'll take care of them. The dance will not be postponed—not if I can prevent it."

Without further ado she emptied the contents of the basket into the fire and walked calmly to the drawing-room, before the terrified Eveline could recover from her astonishment.

Eveline threw herself into a chair so energetically that she broke a spring.

"Nasty old thing!" she muttered. "How'd she like it if I told everybody she rouges and bleaches her hair? I will, too!"

She might have formed even direr plans for vengeance on the recalcitrant beauty had not Dickie Willing meandered into the room with a consequential air, induced by the possession of a new suit of clothes from Sackville street.

"Good morning, Miss Crosspatch," he murmured, after tiptoeing lightly to a position of vantage behind her chair.

Eveline jumped to her feet. "What! You dare come here?" she said, with all the haughtiness she could command, which, to tell the truth, was not very much.

"Rather!" chuckled Dickie, gleefully, depositing his hat on the table and removing his gloves, with the evident intention of holding his ground. "Is the dance on or off?"

Eveline gave him a look of scorn. "Didn't I tell you never to speak to me again?" she demanded.

"That's why I'm doing it," he gurgled.

"Your impertinence is sublime."

"From the sublime to the ridiculous; it's up to you."

"*Indeed!*" she exclaimed, with a petulant shake of her pretty head that to Dickie was most alluring; but it required more courage to embrace that particular opportunity than even he possessed, especially as experience had taught him that girls resent being kissed before luncheon.

"I say," he said, appealingly, "let's make up."

"Not until you apologize for your unpardonable behavior of last night."

Eveline accompanied her words with a frown that Dickie evidently relished, for, instead of apologizing, he laughed.

"I love you," he said, when he had recovered from his merriment. "What more do you want?"

"Words, meaningless words," she answered, with a deprecatory wave of her little hand.

"Well, I like that, by Jove!" he whined. "Been off my feed for a month. Got so thin, clothes won't fit. Got to get a new kit. Damned expensive, loving you."

"Such language to a lady!" Eveline exclaimed, indignantly.

"Apologize—didn't mean to swear—that is, anything but eternal devotion." Then an idea occurred to Dickie. "Perhaps you'd like me to do it up brown. Well, here goes!" Whereupon he dropped upon both knees with a thud that shook the house. But, unfortunately for his calculations, Lady Coldstream came into the room at that moment and was a witness to his intensity.

"Oh, Eveline, Eveline!" he pleaded, with arms extended, "say that you'll be mine!"

As Eveline was unquestionably on the point of wavering, Lady Coldstream thought it wise to prevent the appeal from becoming irresistible; so, coming forward with a cushion snatched from a neighboring divan, she placed it carefully before the astonished Dickie.

"Allow me," she said. "You may find the floor a trifle hard."

Dickie cocked his head on one side and looked up at Lady Coldstream with a fetching smile. "Ha!" he chuckled. "Rather neat, what?"

Eveline, however, saw nothing humorous in the situation. "Perhaps, Mr. Willing," she said, sharply, as, with much difficulty, that irrepressible youth struggled to his feet, "you will be good enough to fulfil the object of your visit; the decorations are still incomplete, and"—with a chilling glance at the English beauty—"Lady Coldstream insists that the dance is on."

Having delivered this tirade with all the irony she could command, she turned haughtily on her heel and flounced out of the room.

Dickie followed meekly. When he reached the door he turned and winked at Lady Coldstream. "Oh, I am enjoying myself," he murmured, as he disappeared behind the portière.

"He's not such a fool as he looks," said Lady Coldstream, settling herself comfortably in an arm-chair. "But what are rich girls for, if it isn't to provide for poor young men?"

II

I appeal to your own conscience.
—*The Winter's Tale.*

LADY COLDSTREAM's experience of the world had convinced her that there is a woman at the bottom of everything, be it good or bad, and it did not need a great deal of acumen to satisfy her that the source of all evil for the Ainslee family was Renée Dressler. Although intuition firmly convinced her that Margaret was innocent of any intrigue with Norman Wendell, she was as yet unable to divine a way out of the dilemma in which her friend had become involved. While carefully sifting the different circumstances of the case—so far as she understood them—with the hope of discovering a way to solve the mystery, she was interrupted by

the entrance of Margaret herself. She was pale and careworn, and had evidently passed a night of anguish. Lady Coldstream went toward her quickly.

"Mornin', dear. I hope you slept."

"I never closed my eyes," answered Margaret, wearily.

"Nonsense. You look fit as a fiddle," said Lady Coldstream, putting her arm about her waist and leading her toward a chair. With a sigh Margaret sank into the chair and looked up at her friend despondently.

"I shall never forget, dear, how good you were to me—never."

"I only stood by a pal—it's a poor sort who wouldn't."

"I don't know another woman who would."

"There, there," said Lady Coldstream, cheerfully. "This isn't the time for sentiment. We've got to pull you out of this mess before it's all over town. The first thing to do is to find Schuyler and tell him everything."

"Oh, he won't believe," said Margaret, bitterly. "He doesn't want to believe."

Lady Coldstream's face assumed an expression of disgust. "Now, what's the use of funking?" she protested.

"You heard what he said. He denied writing the letter, to—to save himself."

"Spoof! Schuyler isn't that sort."

"I tell you I read it," retorted Margaret. "I tell you I saw that woman in his arms."

"And he found you in Wendell's rooms," said Lady Coldstream, with uplifted brows. "Don't forget that."

Margaret sprang to her feet. "Don't speak of that man!" she cried, angrily.

Lady Coldstream looked at her and laughed. "Why not?" she asked, in an irritating way. "By your own confession you knew he was in love with you. Now, a tame cat is all very well, provided he's a cat, but when he happens to be a man, look out!"

"Oh, I admit I was wrong; but is that any excuse for him?"

"Men don't look for excuses; they look for opportunities."

"Well, he had his," said Margaret, bitterly, "and he behaved like a cad."

"I'm not so sure of that," responded Lady Coldstream, with a doubtful shake of the head. "Take your own story. You went there to catch your husband and the Dressler woman. Common sense should have told you that was the last place in the world they would choose. Well, you didn't find them. You found Wendell and a supper-party. Did you go home decently and say nothing about it? No; you poured forth your tale of woe to a man you knew was in love with you, and he promptly offered to console you—just as any self-respecting lover would."

Lady Coldstream paused. Margaret was looking out of the window with a hopeless, woe-begone expression in her eyes. The beauty smiled to herself.

"Did you rise in your wrath and indignation?" she continued. "Did you call for help? No; you meekly told him to wait until to-morrow, and when you heard someone coming you lost your head completely and fled to his bedroom. He lost his head, too, but he lied like a gentleman. Then, when you were caught, and nobody believed your story, did he run to cover? No; he stood up to it like a man. If you'd been even half in love with him you'd have fallen into his arms on the spot and taken the next steamer for the South of France."

"The one man," said Margaret, regretfully, "I thought I could trust. How I have been deceived in him!"

"Yes," replied Lady Coldstream; "it's the clever women who are taken in by men—it's the silly women who take men in."

Margaret turned away from the window.

"Oh, I know I've been a fool," she said.

"Well, we won't argue that point."

Lady Coldstream heard a step behind her and looked up. Ainslee had entered the room quietly, and was gazing at his wife. Margaret turned

and met her husband's eyes. For a moment they stared at each other coldly.

Lady Coldstream looked first at one and then at the other. "Well," she asked, finally, with a desire to relieve the situation, "shall I leave you?"

"If you will," said Ainslee. "I wish to speak to Margaret alone."

"No, no, Muriel," protested Margaret; "don't go! I prefer you to hear."

"As you please," said Lady Coldstream, resuming her seat.

Ainslee took a step toward his wife, then hesitated. He was haggard and careworn, and was evidently struggling to control his emotions.

"Well," said Margaret, "I am waiting."

"Margaret," he said, drawing a hand wearily across his eyes, "all last night I walked the streets trying to find some justification for you. Even if what you suspected were true, is that any excuse for you?"

"If you are here to upbraid me—" she protested.

"No; I leave that to your own conscience."

Margaret's face flushed angrily. "When you are ready to beg forgiveness for your insults," she said, "I will listen."

He started to reply, but she turned away abruptly and walked out of the room.

III

Give him this letter; do it secretly.

—*The Merchant of Venice.*

WHEN Ainslee had recovered from his astonishment at Margaret's extraordinary behavior, he turned to Lady Coldstream.

"I beg forgiveness of her?" he said, in amazement.

Lady Coldstream looked at him and laughed. "My dear boy," she replied, "there are two kinds of fools—those who are born so, and those who make fools of themselves. You belong to the latter class."

"You take her part, of course!" he retorted.

"Rather, when you aren't sportsman enough to ride straight."

"I?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

Lady Coldstream calmly lighted a cigarette before replying. "Oh, the usual domestic drama," she said, as she blew out the match. "The frisky husband and the wicked lady."

"Go on—play your part—you've got it pat enough."

Lady Coldstream made rings of smoke. "Naturally, the wife is jealous," she continued, regardless of his irony. "Was there ever a woman who was not? When she catches the husband with the lady in his arms he tries to deny it. Was there ever a man who wouldn't?"

"Yes," he said, impatiently, "the trick of an unscrupulous woman."

"Circumstantial evidence, however; many a man has been hung on that."

Ainslee walked back and forth excitedly. "I told Margaret the truth," he protested. "She refused to believe."

"Naturally," observed his companion, dryly. "When she finds a letter making a date with the lady."

"There is no such letter!" he exclaimed.

"Beg pardon, there *is* such a letter."

He stopped suddenly and looked Lady Coldstream in the eyes. "Do you mean to tell me that Margaret is innocent?" he asked.

"Rather! I'd stake my last penny on it."

"Then prove it," he said, earnestly.

"God knows I want to believe it!"

Lady Coldstream gave him a look of disgust. "Why, man," she replied, "her own words prove it. Guilty women don't stand up and accuse—they get down on their knees and beg."

For a moment Ainslee stared vacantly at the floor; then he drew his hand across his eyes as if he were trying to gather his thoughts. "Oh, if I could believe it!" he said. "You don't know what tortures I went

through last night. I was mad, Muriel, raving mad! There was nothing I couldn't have done. Then, somehow, I began to think of the men here in New York whose lives had been wrecked like mine. The divorce court—that is their story. One poor fellow went to France and fought; another killed himself. It made me willing to give her one more chance. That was why I came to-day—for the sake of the future—for the sake of my name. And she refused to listen."

"Can't you see she believes you guilty?"

"Guilty?" he exclaimed, turning toward her in astonishment. "Why, Renée Dressler played me that trick because I refused what most men would have jumped at."

"Yes," remarked Lady Coldstream, airily, "she has played you from the word *go*."

This irony was lost on Ainslee. His mind was too much occupied with his own misery.

"And I tried to be square. I made her give me back the letters I wrote her before I was married, and I burned them there," he said, pointing to the fireplace. "Does that sound like playing fast and loose?"

He stopped suddenly. "Wait," he said, hurriedly realizing the events of the previous day. "Could it have been one of those letters?"

"Oho!" muttered Lady Coldstream, "a bit of daylight at last."

Ainslee plunged his hands into his pockets and paced the floor thoughtfully. "Yes," he said, "I did write such a letter—once—but she was out of town. Heaven knows what might have happened otherwise!"

"I say," interrupted Lady Coldstream, impatiently, "are you going to drivel over the past, or are you going to do something? You've got to explain that letter—it's your only chance."

"Easily said, but how?"

"Make her tell, even if you have to make love to her."

He turned toward her quickly. "By Jove!" he exclaimed; "an idea!"

"Well it's about time."

"Yes, it may work," he said, going to the writing table. Seizing a pen, he wrote a hurried note, while Lady Coldstream watched him curiously out of the corner of her eye. When he had finished the missive he blotted it carefully, directed an envelope, and then handed it to her for perusal.

"There, that may do it," he said, touching the bell for a servant.

Lady Coldstream took the letter and read as follows:

"MY DEAR DRESSLER:

"Your wife has a letter I wrote her some months ago. If you will get it, bring her here immediately, and induce her to tell the truth, I will cancel your note and waive the interest."

"Yours truly,

"SCHUYLER AINSLEE."

"Oh, I see," she said, as she handed back the letter. "Hush money."

"Not quite so bad as that," he answered, putting the letter in the envelope and sealing it carefully. "I was rather in love with Renée Dressler once, and when Dressler asked for a loan—well, he got it. The fellow is an all-around cad."

"If he does what you ask," remarked his companion, indignantly, "he's an out-and-out 'rotter.'"

Without replying, Ainslee turned to the servant who had answered the bell and handed him the letter. "Take that note to Mr. Dressler," he said. "Hand it to him yourself. If he is out, bring it back. Under no circumstances give it to anyone else."

When the man had gone he turned to Lady Coldstream. "Muriel," he said, "until I knew Margaret I never took love seriously. It was a game of chance, and it didn't much matter with whom I played."

"Yes," she grunted, sententiously; "I've known men before with hearts like a hand-organ—a tune for every street."

"Oh, it's been a lesson to me," he said, despondently.

"And to her, too," replied Lady Coldstream, dryly.

A footman entered the room and

handed Ainslee a card. He glanced at it carelessly, then started.

"Muriel, look!" he exclaimed, handing the card to his companion. She read the name. It was "Mr. Norman Wendell."

"Whom did he ask for?" she asked the man.

"For Mr. Ainslee, my Lady."

"For me?" exclaimed Ainslee, in astonishment.

"Why not?" said Lady Coldstream. "The morning's the sweet time for repentance." Turning to the man, she ordered him to show in Mr. Wendell.

"Do nothing of the kind," Ainslee commanded.

"Show him in," she repeated, emphatically. The footman was in a quandary, but, inspired by the awe of the nobility which is inborn in every Briton's heart, he hastily proceeded to execute Lady Coldstream's command.

"Muriel," protested Ainslee, "I will not see him."

"You've got to see him," she said, rising from her chair. "You know something—he knows the rest. Hear what he has to say. When you have put two and two together, I'll wager you'll say 'Forgive me, old chap; we've both been wrong!'"

"Not until he proves he isn't a blackguard," he muttered.

"Keep your temper, dear boy," said Lady Coldstream, sweetly. Hearing Wendell's step, she hastily beat a retreat.

"In case you need a lawyer, I'll be in there," she continued, in a whisper, pointing to the drawing-room.

IV

What proof shall I make of that?
—*Much Ado About Nothing.*

AINSLEE turned and bowed stiffly as Wendell entered the room. For a moment the two men faced each other in silence. Ainslee was the first to speak.

"May I inquire the reason for this visit?" he asked, coldly.

"Ainslee," said Wendell, struggling to control his emotion, "I can't let this affair go any further without an explanation. I'm not here to defend myself; you and I have a long score to settle, but I want to tell you, on my honor, that your wife is innocent."

"Why, man, you confessed!" exclaimed Ainslee, in surprise.

"Oh, I don't take back what I said; I love Margaret—you know that perfectly well. But I've been straight with you. I kept my word until you broke yours. When she came there last night I don't think she even suspected what was in my heart. I tell you, she is true as steel. It's more than you deserve."

Ainslee looked at him searchingly. "Then why was she in your room?" he asked.

"She found your letter. She came to confront you and Renée Dressler."

"Then why did you lie to me?"

"Because she was caught like a rat in a trap, and when she told the truth you were coward enough to save yourself."

Ainslee gazed at the floor thoughtfully. For a moment he did not reply.

"Wendell," he said, finally, looking his enemy straight in the eye, "if you think I wrote such a letter—if you believe——"

"I saw with my own eyes," broke in Wendell. "I heard——"

"You saw a clever woman play a bold game to get even with me for refusing to be her monkey-on-a-chain. If you had waited you would have heard the truth."

"But, man, your letter!" cried Wendell.

"Is one I wrote months ago, before I was married—if there *is* such a letter."

"Ainslee," asked Wendell, "is this true?"

"I give you my word of honor."

"Then I have misjudged you."

Ainslee came toward him quickly. "You said she was innocent; now prove it."

"What! You love her?" said Wendell, in astonishment.

"Love her! I'd give my life to save her this disgrace."

Wendell looked at him in silence, not knowing what to think.

"Why do you stare like that?" exclaimed Ainslee. "You are concealing something. Tell me the truth—every word of it."

"Then send for her," said Wendell, quietly.

"For Margaret?"

"Yes. I wish to prove what I say in a way that will leave no doubt in your mind. You don't know what it will cost me—but you will be satisfied."

Ainslee drew back in surprise. "I don't understand," he said.

"Send for Margaret," repeated Wendell. "When she comes," he continued, pointing to the drawing-room, "listen there to what I have to say."

"No," said Ainslee, firmly, "I am no eavesdropper."

"If you value your happiness, do as I say. Only promise me not to interrupt, no matter what you hear."

Wendell was so thoroughly in earnest that Ainslee wavered. He had tried in vain to fathom the mystery of Margaret's conduct. Now he felt it his duty to leave no stone unturned to satisfy himself of her innocence.

"Well," he said, finally, "I promise."

"Schuyler," said Wendell, turning toward him suddenly, "if you'd been frank with me last night this would not have happened. Remember that, won't you?"

Ainslee looked at him in surprise. "Yes," he said; "but I don't understand."

"You will, soon enough. Now, quick—get Margaret."

Ainslee turned and walked to the door of the drawing-room. "Muriel!" he called, "Muriel!"

"Yes," said Lady Coldstream, faintly, from behind the portière.

"Will you send Margaret here?" he continued. "Don't let her know that I want her, or that Mr. Wendell is here. Make any excuse you can."

"I understand."

Wendell waited until he heard Lady Coldstream's step in the hall beyond.

"Did she hear?" he asked.

"But for her I should have refused to see you," said Ainslee. "She's been a trump from the start."

"Don't let her hear now."

"Well, as you please," and Ainslee walked away abruptly and entered the drawing-room. As he drew the portière he felt like a culprit for playing the spy, but he hoped and prayed it was for the best.

Wendell walked back and forth, anxiously waiting for Margaret. "If I had only known," he said. "If I had only known!"

Finally Margaret entered the room, unsuspectingly. She had been told that Nicholas Schuyler had called, in the hope of effecting a reconciliation. There are times when it is a sin to tell the truth, and Lady Coldstream was convinced that this was one of them.

Margaret saw Wendell and drew back. "*YOU!*" she said, in surprise.

"Yes," he answered, coming toward her quickly.

"Why are you here?" she asked, almost harshly.

"For my answer."

"Your answer?"

"You said 'Until to-morrow.' Is it to be always 'Until to-morrow?'"

She colored angrily and turned away. "Last night," she said, "I was charitable enough to think you mad. If you had any heart you would go."

"No, no," he cried, passionately. "I cannot go—I love you—I love you! You are my paradise, my torment!"

"Don't, don't," she exclaimed, drawing back in fright. "Can't you see it is useless? Are you blind?"

"Yes, blind! I see only you."

"Go, go," she cried. "Show some pity, and go."

He was acting a mean part, knowing full well she would hate him for the sacrifice he was making, but there was bitter truth in every word he spoke. "You are mine, by every right on earth!" he cried.

"Because he forgets I am his wife?" she said, indignantly.

"His wife!" he laughed.

"Stop," she commanded. "Because I told you my wretched story—because I trusted you—have you the right to insult me?"

"Is it an insult to think, to dream, to feel only you?"

"And I believed you were my friend!" she said, bitterly. "Can any woman make a man her friend?"

"No. Not the man who loves her with every fibre of his heart," he cried, grasping her wrists.

"Oh, oh," she pleaded, struggling to release herself. "If you had any sense of honor!"

"Listen, Margaret," he whispered, passionately. "What is left except my love?"

"You coward!" she said, throwing him aside with all her strength.

For a moment he stood looking at her. He thought she had never been so beautiful before.

"So this is the end!" he said at last. "You would have married me once—and now when you are free you will not listen." He took a step toward her quickly. "Answer me," he said. "I have a right to know. Is it because you love *him*?"

"Yes," she said, looking him firmly in the eyes, "because I love *him*."

Wendell strode swiftly toward the drawing-room. "Schuyler," he shouted, "Schuyler! Did you hear?"

Ainslee threw aside the curtain and came toward him excitedly. "If I had known the price you meant to pay—" he began.

"Ah, Schuyler," answered Wendell, "there has never been a moment when it was not you. Down on your knees and beg forgiveness."

Without a word Ainslee approached his wife and held out his hands appealingly. "Margaret," he said, "forgive me. You said you would listen when I could beg forgiveness."

Margaret drew back, her cheeks burning. "So you set a trap for me—you played the spy! It was mean—it was cruel!"

"It was I, Margaret," interposed

Wendell. "I begged him to listen. Think what I said to him last night!"

She did not answer. She could not find it in her heart to answer.

"You have proved your innocence," Wendell said. "But what must he think of me?" There was despair in his tone.

Ainslee grasped his hand. "I wish I had half your courage," he said.

Wendell looked up gratefully. He felt the sacrifice had not been in vain.

Lady Coldstream came into the room quietly, and stood for a moment waiting. Finally Ainslee turned to his wife.

"Forgive me!" he said. "It was love for you that made me doubt."

"Forgive you? No. Not until you show me that I can forgive. I need proof as well as you. Why don't you set a trap for her and let me play the spy?"

She turned away to go.

Lady Coldstream stepped before her. "For shame, Margaret! It's a woman's duty to forgive."

Margaret threw her arms about Lady Coldstream's neck and buried her face on her shoulder.

"I—I can't, Muriel," she cried. "They have killed what little heart was left."

V

Forgive him! and forgive us all.

—*Measure for Measure.*

LADY COLDSTREAM was convinced that half the battle had been fought and won, but she was not at all certain about the outcome of the other half, for Renée Dressler was yet to be explained. Fortunately for the success of her schemes, the butler entered the room at the very moment when she was most at a loss for a plan of campaign, and gravely heralded the arrival of "Mr. and Mrs. Dressler."

At the sound of those detested names, Margaret turned toward her husband. "That creature dares come here?" she exclaimed.

"Hush!" said Lady Coldstream, quickly, placing a finger over her

lips to enjoin caution. "Your cue is silence."

Renée Dressler's reception was not of the most cordial nature. Lady Coldstream and Ainslee bowed coldly, while Margaret turned her back abruptly. Renée saw, however, by Wendell's presence, and the worried expression on the faces about her, that she had interrupted the domestic drama at an inopportune moment, and this conclusion aroused a smile of satisfaction.

"What a charming funeral!" she said, with an amused glance about the room. "Is one expected to send flowers?"

The chilliness of the atmosphere, however, was in no wise tempered by this remark.

"Have you got it?" Ainslee whispered hastily, to Dressler.

Dressler placed a letter quietly in Ainslee's hand. "I found it in her desk," he said, keeping an eye on the movements of his wife. "If she won't tell the truth, I will."

"I seem to be the corpse," remarked Renée Dressler, after several futile attempts to gain recognition for herself.

"Not yet," said Lady Coldstream, in a manner that foreboded evil.

"Oh, really!" replied Renée, defiantly. "I'll die hard, you'll find."

"A cat usually has nine lives," remarked Lady Coldstream *sotto voce* to Wendell.

Renée Dressler began to suspect that Monty had been up to some deviltry.

"You asked my husband to bring me here," she said to Margaret, suddenly. "Well?"

"I?" exclaimed Margaret, in surprise.

"My wife," interrupted Ainslee, quickly, "wishes you to explain the circumstances connected with this letter."

He quietly took the letter Monty had given him from its envelope and held it before her eyes. But she was equal to the occasion.

"Oh," she said, after a careless

glance at the writing, "the letter you wrote me yesterday."

"Then you *did* receive a letter yesterday?" said Lady Coldstream, pointedly.

For a moment Ainslee was disconcerted by the audacity of her defense, but he recovered himself quickly.

"There is no date," he said, examining the letter carefully. "Are you quite sure yesterday was not a year ago?"

Renée looked at him with an expression of surprise. "Oh, how stupid of me!" she said, with feigned naïveté. "If I'd only known the story you meant to tell! Well, I've done it—we may as well face the music."

"Very clever, very clever," answered Ainslee, quietly. "But, if you do not care to tell the truth, I think your husband will spare you the trouble."

"What! Monty tell the truth!" she laughed sarcastically. "I adore new sensations."

"My dear," said her husband, in a careless way that augured trouble, "when you returned Mr. Ainslee the letters he wrote you before his marriage, this one was overlooked. I found it, and, as it bears no date, and might be misconstrued, I took the liberty of returning it myself."

"Fool!" she hissed, under her breath.

A quiet smile of satisfaction crossed Monty's lips. "Oh, I'm not sure of that," he said. "Mr. Ainslee appreciates my kindness so thoroughly that you ought to share my gratitude."

She shrugged her shoulders contemptuously and turned away.

"Well," she muttered, "as you have made it a matter of business."

"One moment, my dear," he answered, stepping quickly before her and barring her way. "Is what I say true, or do you prefer a scandal?"

"Oh, dear, no!" she laughed scornfully. "Scandals are so common nowadays that I couldn't even become a sensation."

"Then you acknowledge I speak the truth?"

"My dear, your reputation for veracity is such that I wouldn't attempt to contradict you."

Ainslee had been struggling to control his anger, but it broke forth at last. "Then tell my wife," he cried, "that what she saw yesterday was a damnable trick played by you in a moment of pique."

"Don't, Schuyler," protested Renée, "you know I hate heroics."

"Tell her the truth," he commanded.

"When you refrain from talking long enough to give me the opportunity."

She turned to Margaret.

"My dear Mrs. Ainslee," she said, "you really ought to exhibit your husband under glass. A man who loves his wife is such a curiosity that the public ought not to be deprived of the pleasure of seeing one."

Margaret had listened in silence to all that had been said. The anger in her heart had slowly given place to hope, until finally she realized that she had been the victim of a cowardly revenge.

"Mrs. Dressler," she said, haughtily, "I thank you for your sincerity. I wish I could forgive your cruelty."

For a moment Renée forgot the part she was acting. "You see the husband I have," she said. "Can you blame me for envying you yours?" It was only a momentary glimpse of the woman beneath the mask, but it was enough to tell the story of a life, for women are usually what men make them—tender creatures of sentiment, or devils.

Renée regretted what she had said, for the old reckless look came into her eyes, and her lip curled contemptuously. "You really must excuse me," she continued, quickly. "I'm lunching out."

She put out her hand, but her cruelty was more than Margaret could forgive. Renée shrugged her shoulders and glanced about the room defiantly.

"Good morning, everybody," she said. Ainslee and Wendell looked

the other way. Lady Coldstream turned her back.

"I see," she continued, as a parting shaft, "that the manners of good society are becoming quite as bad as the morals."

Beaten, but not humiliated, she turned away and walked slowly out of the room, her head held high in defiance, and her eyes flashing contempt for the world that had turned its back upon her. When she had gone Dressler quietly touched Ainslee's arm.

"How about—? you know," he said, suggestively.

"This afternoon, at my office," Ainslee replied, shortly.

Dressler smiled, and nodded familiarly to Margaret and Lady Coldstream. "Good morning, ladies," he said, walking toward the door. "Hope you don't mind my hurrying. The missis 'll give me the deuce if I keep her waiting."

When Lady Coldstream heard his step in the hall she turned to Wendell. "'Pon my word," she exclaimed, "there's a brace of birds for you."

"Vultures!" commented Wendell, vigorously.

Eveline came rushing into the room, dragging Dickie Willing after her.

"Cousin Margaret," she called, "we—we're engaged."

"Ha! Rather neat, what?" chuckled Dickie.

The moment for the promulgation of this startling news was not opportune, and nobody realized this so thoroughly as Lady Coldstream. Before Eveline could recover from the astonishment caused by the frigid reception of the announcement that she had selected a partner for life, Lady Coldstream seized her by the hand and dragged her forcibly out of the room.

"Who cares if you are engaged?" she said. "Come, this is no place for you."

Dickie followed meekly. "Oh, I am enjoying myself," he muttered as he went.

When Lady Coldstream and her charges had disappeared, Margaret and Ainslee looked at each other.

They both felt very foolish, and for a moment neither had the courage to speak. Ainslee, however, finally stepped forward manfully and assumed the burden of blame.

"Margaret," he said, "can you forgive?"

"Oh, Schuyler, I've been such a fool!" she cried, burying her face on his shoulder.

For the moment they forgot poor Wendell. He stood there alone, gaz-

ing at the last act of a comedy in which he had played the only mournful rôle. The sight of their happiness affected him profoundly. Dazed and unnerved, he turned away.

Ainslee looked up suddenly. "Why, Norman, old man," he said, "you're not going?"

"Yes, I'm going."

"But where?" asked Margaret, cheerfully.

"God knows!"



A LIFE

I SAW the little maiden moon—

She was so shy, so shy,
She hid herself behind a cloud
Till all the stars went by;
And pure as sea foam was her robe
And white as ivory,
And lily-buds that blow on earth
Raised timid heads to see.

I saw the moon, the full-grown moon,

Leap from the ocean's hold,
And bare her beauty to the sky,
Fierce, glorious and bold;
And crimson was her flaunting robe
And red as sin, maybe,
And poppy-buds that blow on earth
Raised wicked heads to see.

I saw the moon, the dying moon,

Falter across the sky;
White faced she fell before the morn
That smiled to see her die.
No wave that kissed her feet of old
But mocked her misery;
Only the sere, blown leaves of earth
Might mourn for such as she.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

A BUTTERFLY OF FASHION

By Oliver Herford

A *REAL* Butterfly, I mean,
 With Orange-pointed saffron wings
 And coat of inky Velveteen—
 None of your Fashion-plated Things

That dangle from the Apronstrings
 Of Mrs. Grundy—or you see
 Loll by the Stage Door or the Wings,
 Or sadly flit from Tea to Tea.

Not such a Butterfly was he;
 He lived for Sunshine and the Hour;
 He did not flit from Tea to Tea,
 But gayly flew from Flower to Flower.

One Day, there came a Thunder Shower—
 An Open Window he espied.
 He fluttered in; behold, a Flower!
 An Azure Rose with petals wide.

He did not linger to decide
Which Flower; there was no other there.
 He calmly settled down inside
 That Rose, and no one said "*Beware!*"

There was no Friend to say, "Take care!"
 How ever, then, could he suppose
 This Blossom of such Color Rare
 Was just an Artificial Rose?

All might have ended well—who knows—
 But just then someone chanced to say:
 "*The very Latest Thing! That Rose*
In Paris is the Rage To-day."

No Rose of such a Tint *outré*
 Was ever seen in Garden Bed;
 The Butterfly had such a Gay,
 Chromatic Sense, it turned his head.

"*The Very Latest Thing?*" he said;
 "Long have I sighed for something New!
 O Roses Yellow, White and Red,
 Let others sip; *mine shall be Blue!*"

The Flavor was not Nice, 'tis true,
 (He felt a Pain inside his Waist).
 "It is not well to overdo,"
 Said he, "a just-acquired taste."

The Shower passed; he joined in haste
 His friends. With condescension great,
 Said he, "I fear your time you waste;
Real Roses are quite out of date."

He argued early, argued late,
 Till what was erst a HARMLESS POSE
 Grew to a Fierce, Inordinate
 Craving for Artificial Rose.

He haunted Garden Parties, Shows,
 Wherever Ladies Congregate,
 And in their Bonnets thrust his nose
 His Craving Fierce to Sate.

At last he chanced, sad to relate,
 Into a Caterer's with his Pose,
 And there Pneumonia was his Fate
 From *sitting on an Ice Cream Rose*.

O Reader, shun the Harmless Pose.
 They buried him, with scant lament,
 Beneath a Common Brier-Rose,
 And wrote:

<p>HERE LIES A DECADENT.</p>



THE SOCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY

(A FEW SPECIMEN APPLICATIONS)

I

NAME: Nicholas Currie Van Currie.*Business:* His father's.*Present condition:* Age, 25; unmarried, but nice looking; four years at Cambridge; can't spell; Bond street ancestry; dense, but in good form; pink and healthy; sisters think there's a "lot to him."*Wishes to be insured against:* Ever being bothered.*Risk:* Safe. Ignorance is bliss.

II

Name: Mrs. Zenas Pringle.*Business:* Living down Zenas.*Present condition:* Age, 45; fat husband makes soap and millions; homely daughter with stunning figure; European travel; house at Newport; two or three dukes; good cook; name in the papers.*Wishes to be insured against:* Losing her grip.*Risk:* Unsafe. Too many dukes in the market.

III

Name: Miss Edith Croydon.*Business:* Philanthropy.*Present condition:* Age, 26; rich; handsome; college settlement; wants to join a sisterhood; slum missions; living for others; sweet sacrifice.*Wishes to be insured against:* Matrimony.*Risk:* Unsafe. Will probably marry soon a short, stout, bald stockbroker.

IV

Name: Gregory Tailer-Taylor.*Business:* Husband.*Present condition:* Poor, and age, 32; rich wife, age, 38; no children; never without guests in the house; gentleman farmer; brandy; tall and heavy; rides well; Mrs. T. T. tiresome and beginning to have gout.*Wishes to be insured against:* Thinking too much.*Risk:* Safe. Plenty of brandy.

A. V. WINTERROTH.



AS IT HAPPENED

SHE did not know a driver from a cleek;
 She fozzled, and the near-by sod she tore;
 She couldn't make the course within a week,
 There was no need to cry a warning "fore!"
 Her stance, her swing, and e'en her waggle—all
 Were not according to the ethics; yet,
 Although she very seldom hit the ball,
 Her *form* was simply perfect—yes, you bet!

EDWIN L. SABIN.

THE PHANTOM DUKE

By Edgar Saltus

O YEZ: There is a case, presently to be heard, which, whether founded on fiction or founded on fact, is too good to be true. That is its merit and also its demerit. Known as the Matter of Druce *et al.*, it consists in the contention of an unknown lady that a well-known duchy belongs to her son. The details follow hereinafter. Before considering them, it is worth noting that not since the great days of "The Terrible Temptation" and the still greater days of the Tichborne trial has England produced anything with which, for sheer deviltry, they can be compared.

As a story, we prefer it to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." We prefer it even to "Lost Sir Massingbird." The latter, published three decades ago, concerned a most audacious baronet who, after various vilenesses, vanished in a paragraph and reappeared as a skeleton in the trunk of a tree.

It was a good story, but it might have been better. For that, though, there is an excuse.

Payn, the author of it, labored, in common with all other makers of fiction, under a curse. Readers refuse to allow a novelist to deal with anything but the probable. The refusal is unrighteous. It is worse; it is stupid. The surprises of life transcend those of reason. The probable is always the imaginary. It is the improbable that occurs. The Matter of Druce is a case in point. In Payn's story there was a vanishing baronet. Here is a vanishing peer, a real dead duke. The audaciousness and various villainies of Sir Massingbird become nursery pranks beside the satanic episodes of his grand masquer-

ade. What is a skeleton in the trunk of a tree beside a coffin with old iron in it? What is a wicked baronet who takes to flight beside a wickeder duke who takes to trade? The baronet contented himself with disappearing. He had to. The limits of a three-volume novel prevented him from doing worse. Unhandicapped by any such nonsense, the duke not merely disappeared: he disappeared into a furniture dealer, had himself die and be buried, and, reappearing, frightened his shop-folk out of their wits.

A story such as that has three charms. It combines the dramatic, the devilish and the delicious. Like "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," the adventures which it discloses are too enchanting to have actually occurred. For if they did occur, where is the shilling shocker that surpasses them? And yet, if they did not, what an imagination the plaintiff must possess! Considered as a romance, the story knocks everything else into a cocked hat. Considered as a case, the Tichborne suit doesn't hold a candle to it. In the latter the widow of a gentleman recognized a butcher as her dead son. In the present instance, the daughter-in-law of a tradesman recognizes a dead duke as the grandfather of her child. There is a story with material enough in it for a circulating library. It revolves, too, precisely as it should, about a murder. It has the great merit, also, of explaining that which no one has understood. It elucidates a mystery, and, incidentally, a crime. On the subterranean gardens of Welbeck Abbey it turns a Welsbach light. What novel could do more?

But oyez: Welbeck Abbey is the seat of the Dukes of Portland. Fifty years ago, by the clock, Lord George Bentinck was found dead there. Lord George was the brother of the existing incumbent. How he died, and why he died, constitute the central situation of this story. From it the masquerade proceeds. About it the allegations of the plaintiff are woven.

According to these allegations, Lord George and the duke, his brother, were in love with the same young person. Among the English middle classes a duke is regarded as *sacrosanct*, semi-royal and almost holy. This particular duke, the fifth of his race, does not seem to have shared these illusions. A plain man with a large heart and a small head, he amused himself in collecting high hats and unrecognizable children. In the pursuit of these diversions one day, or rather one night, he encountered his brother. Lord George was similarly engaged.

Imitation is flattery's most odious form. Moreover, though the heart of the duke was large, there was no room in it for a rival. For the first time the aroma of the strawberry leaves, which are the insignia of his rank, mounted headily. The illusions of the middle classes claimed him. At the moment he, too, regarded himself as quasi-royal, perhaps inviolate as well. If we may believe the plaintiff—and we are most anxious to—he raised a hand. When it fell his brother fell with it. Lord George was dead.

Then, instantly, the headiness of those leaves evaporated. He turned to the illusions. They had gone. Abruptly the Abbey changed. He was not there any more. It was in the gloom of a great gaunt court that he stood. He looked about. It was the Old Bailey. At the dock was a prisoner. He stared at him. It was himself. He could hear the benches creak. He could see the judge, one finger raised. Toward him there drifted the portentous words, "May God have mercy on your soul." Then, just as the headiness of the

strawberry leaves had departed, so did that vision and the horror of it fade. But at his feet the dead man lay.

In what manner, whether alone or assisted, he got the body to the park and left it there, one may surmise, yet perhaps never know. In this tenebrous chronicle there are many points unelucidated yet. One thing, though, is clear. The death of Lord George was attributed to accident. Not by everybody, however. There were some who knew. The knowledge of their knowledge rebeckoned the vision. Waking or sleeping, always it was there. Do what he could to banish it, always it returned. Always he heard those benches creak. Always he saw that prisoner in the dock. Always the portentous words echoed in his ears. In the companionship of such sights and sounds another might have lost his reason. The Duke of Portland lost his identity. From a peer he became a mole.

The story of the subterranean palace which he then constructed has defrayed the gossip of a million teas. As a matter of fact, the palace and its labyrinths are what Mr. Baedeker calls Objects of Interest still. Beneath Welbeck Abbey he built another seat. Below the grounds he laid out gardens. He put a chapel there; he put passages, exits, trapdoors and a drive five miles long. Finally he put himself there. When all was complete he descended from the outer-air to the under-earth. It was Plutonian, and, as such, perhaps infernal. For with him the vision descended too.

In the chapel, however he prayed, it was not salvation he saw, but the gallows. On the drive, however he rode, behind him was a hue and cry. In a cellar beneath a cellar he could hide from the day, but not from fright. He turned darkness into a solid, yet through it there loomed, in deeper darkness, the gloom of a grim, gaunt court. The palace became a purgatory. Then the mole burrowed deeper.

Presupposing a visit from the police, he could get away. The passages and exits led very far. Escape was easy. But how long would it last? A duke is a marked man. He needed a disguise, and presently he found one. His solicitors received instructions to transfer from his account to that of T. C. Druce the sum of two hundred thousand pounds.

Here we are not merely underground; we are right in the heart of a phantasmagoria. The real is giving to the fictitious. But there is a metamorphosis in preparation. Watch a moment, and from the skin of a mole a shopkeeper will emerge. Ovid imagined nothing as surprising. Cagliostro, who made little diamonds big and old women young, was unequal to such wizardry. Even Edison could not do it.

That, though, is natural. The old duke, dead now, and damned too, no doubt, had a crime to elude. To stir the wits, there is nothing like it. Besides, he was not thinking of getting his name in the papers, but of keeping it out; not of fame, but of safety. In the haunted halls in which he groped there was none for him whatever. The echo of his own footsteps startled him. There were moments when he mistook them for those of Justice; there must have been moments when he wished they were, when even the worst that could be were better than that ceaseless fright. But though for the murder of Lord George, Justice might cry "Fratricide!" at a peer of the realm, never would it bother with a tradesman. Such is the potency of logic that, no sooner was that deduction reached than the spectre of the police was exorcised. Fright departed, and, parenthetically, the duke did too.

Were we writing fiction instead of facts, here conveniently the first part might close. Having given the gentle reader a hint, we should do our best to muddle him. But literature disdains such practices. It scorns to run a secret through its copy. Here is the plot:

The money transferred and the vision gone, the Duke of Portland vanished from Welbeck Abbey. Coincidentally, a Mr. Druce opened a furniture shop in London. Located in Baker street, it stands there still. Recent investigations have shown that beneath it subterranean passages and exits were constructed. Recent testimony has shown that the proprietor never exhibited himself to his customers. Precisely as the duke preferred to live underground, so did the furniture dealer prefer the solitude of the back office. But the duke hid from people who knew him. It is alleged that from those same people Druce hid, too. At Welbeck the duke ordered the servants and tenantry never to approach him. In Baker street, Druce's orders to his shop-folk were the same.

Here the plot thickens. A month after the duke vanished from Welbeck he turned up there again. Simultaneously from Baker street Druce disappeared. Then presently the duke vanished anew from Welbeck. Thereat in Baker street Druce reappeared.

At this juncture the furniture man acquired by purchase a villa at Hendon and proceeded to collect children and hats. Meanwhile at Welbeck the duke was constantly appearing and disappearing, and meanwhile in Baker street Druce was similarly engaged. Subsequently the latter married, became a pillar of the church, the father of a boy, and, after years of middle-class respectability, punctuated, however, by periodic absences, finally concluded to die. Coincidentally, the duke turned up for good—or for bad—at Welbeck, where, full of years and of honors, ultimately he departed this life.

Here the plot grows thicker. During the progress of these events the boy grew to manhood, married and begot a son. It is for the benefit of that son that the present action was instituted. He is claimant to the Portland title and estates. The plaintiff, his mother, is the daughter-in-law of the Baker street man.

The contention of this lady is evan-

gelical in its simplicity. She says that the duke and the tradesman were one and the same; that, severally and jointly, they connived at a masquerade beside which the Carnival of Venice is dreary. She also says that when it occurred to Druce to die, he effected his purpose by filling a coffin with lead, which he took from the roof of the Hendon villa. She says, too, that for a man to die he must be born, and that there is no record of Druce's nativity. What is more to the point, she has shown that the certificate of Druce's death is not attested, and she has further shown that after his supposed demise he was encountered in a state of great liveliness. So strong, she alleges, had the phantom habit become, that one day, long after his shop-folk fancied him safe in his coffin, he shot up through a trap-door among them and frightened them all into fits. But that, though relevant, material and highly amusing, is beside the real issue.

To prove the case, the plaintiff obtained an order permitting her to open the coffin. Before it could be executed, its validity was contested and the matter taken to a court of higher jurisdiction, where, after those delays against which even Shakespeare protested, it will be heard anew. Should the petition finally be denied, we suggest, in the interest of all those whom the allegations have entertained, that the coffin be X-rayed. If, then, not dust and ashes, but lead and iron be discovered, Reade, Collins, Stevenson and Payn may hide their diminished ghosts.

But let us consider the matter less seriously. Everything being possible, it may be that the facts are as the plaintiff alleges. We doubt it, however, and that for a reason already advanced. They are too good to be true. Moreover, admitting that a furniture dealer could be wicked enough to play hocus-pocus with himself, it does not follow that he was Duke of Portland, and still less that he killed his brother. On the other hand, if the facts be proven, the career of this surprising peer contains the

sublimate of fiction and the quintessence of drama. In conjecturing his enjoyment of it our pen fairly splutters.

For enjoyment, unique if not unalloyed, there must have been. Lord George was found dead in 1840. Druce decided to die in 1864. It was in 1879 that the duke gave up the ghost. Between the first event and the second there was time enough for any fright, however lancinating, to abate, and for any vision, however hallucinating, to subside. Crime has its Statute of Limitations. So, too, has fear.

Now, assuming, for the fun of it, that the facts coincide with the allegations, we may assume, also, that as the years fell by, the duke, whether at Welbeck or at Hendon, must have seen the spectres in his mind take themselves off, little by little, as such spectres do. As they departed, their retreat must have interested him. Were he a student, which is improbable, he must have recalled Bossuet bawling from the pulpit that men carry their hell and their paradise in their hearts. Were he a philanthropist, which is not improbable, he must have taken pleasure in wondering, if stupidity hurt, how many would yell. And if, as is not improbable either, he became with age introspective, he must have taken a real delight in the memories of his spacious career. Instead of being hanged and being done for, Providence had not merely permitted him to continue to live, it had permitted him to lead two lives.

We may assume further that before he died he felt that some day, sooner or later, the truth would be known and shock the middle classes. It may be that he hoped it would. It may be that if he had a regret it was that he would not be here to enjoy it. It is our regret, too. He deserved better things than a posthumous lawsuit. The adventures which he enjoyed, and the frights which he didn't, belong far more to the enchanted tomes of romance than to a clerk's dull chronicle of facts. It

will be a distinct loss to literature should they turn out real instead of false.

But no matter about that. The point is elsewhere, or rather it is here. Mrs. Druce may never get the

dukedom for her son. Yet were we the Conservative party we would procure her a peerage for the entertainment which she has caused. In a humdrum age like the present such enterprise deserves a reward.



THE SUBTLENESS OF DICKIE

By Sewell Ford

THERE were Russian cigarettes and Scotch before Dickie. Also, he had his back to the avenue. Seeing this, I knew the matter to be a desperate one.

"What's she like, Dickie?" said I, as a long shot.

"I'll not tell," said Dickie. "You're such an old prude about women."

"Are you trying to flatter me, Dickie?"

"Then it's because you're so thundering sly. But I don't care. Laugh if you want to; it was heavenly while it lasted."

"Then it's all over?"

"All over," said Dickie, with a sigh, as he reached for the Scotch.

I lighted one of Dickie's fat Russians. He gets them by the gross. They go on the governor's grocery bill.

Dickie sighed again. Then he looked hopelessly at me and said:

"Of course, you wouldn't understand—you couldn't."

"Of course not," said I. "Is she in the first or second row?"

"Oh, I say, I'm no Johnny; I chucked all that long ago."

Dickie has just turned twenty-two.

I apologized humbly, and offered Dickie one of his cigarettes.

"It was Cæsar, wasn't it, who said, '*Veni, Vidi, Vici?*'" he went on. "Well, that tells the story. We met, we loved, we parted."

"Rather a free translation, Dickie, but I imagine the affair warrants it. Somewhat impetuous, was it not?"

"Lasted two minutes," said Dickie, solemnly. Then he livened. "Say, old man, did you ever meet a girl with eyes of gold—you'd call them bright brown, but they are gold, gold with brown specks in them—did you?"

"Only one," I admitted.

"But they weren't such eyes. No, those are the only golden eyes in the world. And the reddest, softest, sweetest lips that ever——"

"Why, Dickie! You must have kissed her."

"The moment I saw her. It was a rash thing to do, but I risked it—and won."

"Aha! she kissed back?"

Dickie raised his Scotch and looked over the glass's rim toward the ceiling, where an apoplectic cherub rolled on a bank of unconvincing clouds. He was in an ecstasy of reminiscence. But he said no word.

"How many times? Come, now," I urged.

But Dickie smiled and shook his head. You would hardly expect such subtleness in a mere youth.

"Three?" I suggested.

"A dozen," said Dickie.

"You reckless young scamp! I wonder Mrs. Munnigram didn't come into the hall and catch you at it."

"Why, she did."

I had caught Dickie off his guard. There followed an interesting bout between manly shame and the pride of youth. It was a draw. Dickie resumed:

"Anyway, maid or no maid, rich or poor, high or low, she's the sweetest girl that ever breathed. Those two minutes when I felt her in my arms and looked into her eyes I shall remember as long as I live."

"Good for you, my boy," said I, and grasped his hand. I believe they do that on the stage, and, heaven knows, Dickie was theatrical. His shame had short life.

"But say, how the devil did you know? Has it got about the club so soon?"

"Dickie," said I, "it is useless for me to deny the thing any longer; I am Sherlock Holmes."

"Oh, chuck it, now. Who told you?"

I pointed my cane at Dickie.

"I?"

"It was the same. You said you were asked out to the Park for a few

days. Then you wanted to know what sort the Munnigrams were. Now you tell me about golden eyes with brown spots in them. Dickie, you were right; there is only one such pair of eyes in the world—and they belong to Mrs. Munnigram's parlor maid."

Dickie drank an unuttered toast. Then he reverted to his trouble.

"But what shall I do? Where shall I go? I can't stand the chaff of the fellows at the club, you know, and when I think of what the women will say—'more business by Dickie, very dramatic'—I—I'll go to Philadelphia."

Clearly, here was a desperate man.

"Don't," said I. "It's all right."

"All right?" he said, with wonder in his eyes.

"Why, of course, you cub. We all take toll of Peggie O'Neill when we go to the Munnigrams; only we don't make pigs of ourselves, and we are not always caught."

When I left Dickie he had his feet on the window seat. The Avenue was once more the primrose path.



THE DAWN OF LOVE

SWEETER than any earthly dawn is this,
 The morning of our love, when her fond eyes
 Open like little flowers of Paradise
 And fill the garden place of dreams with bliss.
 No glory of the daybreak do I miss—
 Her blushes are far fairer than the skies,
 Her smile than all the beauty of sunrise,
 And like a breath of heaven is her kiss.

Her hair is like a golden mist above
 The snowy bosom, that unsounded sea,
 The undercurrent and the tide whereof
 Are but the yearning of her heart for me;
 And in the lyric whisper of her love
 Sounds the far murmur of eternity.

FREDERIC FAIRCHILD SHERMAN.

ONE OF CATTERMOLLE'S EXPERIMENTS

By Julian Hawthorne

AFTER middle life one can usually assign people one meets to their typical pigeon-holes; but I cannot classify Cattermole. I am human, and he is phantasmal.

In the twenty years since we used to be together he has changed. So do we all, of course, between thirty and fifty; we grow older, get lines on the face, gray in the hair, a stoop in the shoulders, or a paunch, or a drag in the step. But Cattermole, from a lithe, quick, graceful, handsome youth, has become ghastly and phantasmal—I recur to that adjective.

His hair falls, as thick and straight as ever, on either side his long face, and is cut short off at the level of the lobes of his ears; but from jet black it has become perfectly white. Singularly white, too, is his complexion; it seems luminous or phosphorescent almost, like punk wood in the dark; some disease, perhaps, has taken the red from his blood. Amidst this spectral colorlessness his eyes, seemingly twice as big and black as before, glow forth; they no longer sparkle, but glow, as if a deep fire burned within them.

There is no lessening of his intellectual power; on the contrary, he has a look of preternatural intelligence, saved from being embarrassing or disagreeable only by his exceeding courteousness. Perfect manners, indeed, he always had, subtle, refined; a soothing, fascinating, winning style of accost; but now they seem uncanny—this tact, polish, suavity, accuracy of touch and softness. They are irresistible while you are in his presence, perhaps because you feel obscurely flattered and allured

by intercourse with that great brain lurking behind these outward manifestations. How skilfully and enchantingly it handles you! Nevertheless, when you are apart from his spell you feel uneasy.

I must confess, though, that nothing could be, apparently, more easy, simple and frank than Cattermole's communion with me during the twenty-four hours that I have been his guest. Is it only a fancy of mine—this perception of a gulf between us, impassable and unspeakable? I am human and he seems phantasmal. I can get no nearer to it, at present, than that; and I don't quite comprehend what I mean.

Of his history since University days I know the outline only. It was then a foregone conclusion that he could make himself what he pleased, and we assumed that he was to be a statesman; not the President—that did not seem great enough—but one of the superb Warwicks of history—the king makers and unmakers. He studied law, and was admitted to the bar; later, sat a term or two in Congress. At this time he was poor. Then came the great event. Jim Mahone, the wild Irishman, whom he had saved from the scaffold by his famous address to the jury in the Pawling murder case, died in Colorado, where he had become a lucky miner, bequeathing Cattermole twelve million dollars.

Most millionaires become public characters at once, but Cattermole disappeared; he used the resources of his wealth to conceal himself. No political assessor could find him, no tax gatherer locate his estates, no

charities monger run him down; his millions could be traced in no investment; no broker represented him on 'Change. He relinquished (if he ever had it) his ambition for State affairs; he ignored society, and left the world with its mouth open. Nobody could account for it.

Physically, of course, he still existed; glimpses were occasionally caught of him on Fifth avenue, Piccadilly, at Paris, Cairo, Simla, Rome, Yokohama, San Francisco, Valparaiso; he was said to have a suite of rooms at a hotel here, bachelor apartments there, a villa somewhere else; in short, though he was no longer in the world, he was on the earth. But you never saw mention of his name in the newspapers; he was guest at no public banquet or other social function; he never raced horses or joined the yacht club. With the enormous leverage of that fortune in his hand he vanished, and his place knew him no more.

Naturally, he was forgotten before long. It was surmised that the amount of his fortune had been exaggerated; that he was victim to consumption, cancer, hypochondria, leprosy, insanity; again, it was asserted that he was secretly the most accomplished sybarite living. But at length he ceased to be mentioned at all; and for my own part, though I used to be as near him as anyone, if I have bestowed a thought on him these ten years past it was as upon a dead man. Yet here I am at his country place up the Hudson in the lap of luxury. Cattermole has offered no explanation of his long self-exile, but resumes our intercourse as if it had never been interrupted. Possibly, like fabulous sea monsters, after showing above the surface for a few weeks or months, he will sink again to the depths for another generation. But he excites my curiosity, and I hope to find him out. What game is afoot, I wonder?

II

A MARVELOUS man, Cattermole; not easily understood, easily misjudged.

That mighty brain is fed by as mighty a heart; but he is shy and secret as a girl.

One might call him a modern Haroun Al Raschid, traveling in disguise, studying man not in cold curiosity, but to do him good. He is a mortal providence or almoner of God, endowed with wisdom, goodness and power; a man who has put aside a career that would have made him immortal in men's mouths, for the sake of blessing humble lives which could not proclaim because they knew not their benefactor. Did ever wealth find such a steward?

Cattermole is incapable of blowing his own trumpet, but from our long talk yesterday I divine much. He is, after all, as transparent as he is deep; and perhaps a sympathetic vein in me helps him disclose himself so naively. In our youth, I remember, I was his confidant. Twenty years' silent devotion to poor people—what a record! He does not suspect how much I have gathered from his unguarded talk—his prattle, I might call it. If he distrusted me, he would shield himself with adamant; the mystery with which he has clothed himself all these years proves that. But our former friendship—I had forgotten how close it was—disarmed him, and he spoke without disguise. I did not show him how I was affected, lest he should be stricken silent. In fact, I don't know why I was affected so much; I am not sentimental, as a rule. Perhaps his voice and eyes had something to do with it.

In spite of his long separation from the persons and things of his former life, he remembers them. He mentioned Mabel Lyell, for instance. She jilted him a month before he got Jim Mahone's legacy. Tom Chantrey seemed a great catch in comparison with the poor young lawyer; but I fancy the event that happened four weeks after she and Chantrey were married must have cast a cloud over their honeymoon; for Mabel, even at that early period, cared more for the world than for romance. And what a figure she would have made with

Cattermole's millions! I recall that Cattermole never said a word against her at the time, and yet her conduct must have hit him hard. At all events, he is still a bachelor. He spoke of her to-day with a sort of musing tenderness, as if he were looking at a photograph of a dead friend. I gave him what news I had of her. Chantrey died a year or two ago, leaving no money, to speak of; but their daughter, Marion, is gifted with beauty and a voice, both carefully trained, and she made a good début in Opera last season, and will sing here next winter.

Cattermole listened to me, sitting sidewise in his low-backed chair, one long leg thrown across the other, hands folded on his knee, and that remarkable head bent forward.

"So you've heard her sing? What is her voice?"

"Pure soprano; a wonderful voice, but cold," said I. "It's like diamond-clear water flowing over ice, if you want a simile."

He meditated a while, ploughing his slender fingers through his long hair.

"Such a voice," he finally said, "can win admiration, but not enthusiasm, devotion, furor. It won't bring nations to her feet. I would like her to be the greatest singer in the world!"

"She is what she is; she can't be changed now."

"Great music is, in the first place, warmth, color and emotion," said he; "in the second place, it's light, form and intellect. In other words, music—singing—is love audibly expressed by art. Until love has awakened the soul it cannot reach the highest point of art."

"Then Marion won't reach it. She is said to have already declined several good offers on the ground that she's married to her art."

"That is a shallow theory," he replied. "Love does not exclude art; it is the life of art, and most of all, of music. What she needs is love—a great passion."

"Perhaps; but, without being an avowed man-hater, the girl seems to

care nothing for men. There's such a thing as heredity, you know," I ventured to add.

"She is but a girl of twenty," he said; and then, suddenly rising to his feet, appealed to me with great force: "Why don't you influence her?"

It surprised me. "Why don't you influence her yourself?" I returned. "Have her and her mother up here; they're in town."

He gazed abstractedly for a few moments, pressing his lips against each other, and at last exclaimed, "So I will!"

III

MARION and her mother arrived yesterday. So, also, did a young fellow named Morton Travers. He is a Harvard graduate, with more physique than brains, I judge; distinguished himself in some international university boat race a year or two ago, I believe. I presume Cattermole must have met him in London. Outside of his muscles, however, there is a certain power about the youth, a vigor of temperament, a massive self-poise, a steady, black-browed intensity in his gaze. He is polite and shows good form, but I don't take to him particularly. What he is here for I know not.

Mrs. Chantrey never looked better, or seemed more disposed to be agreeable. I don't approve of this lady, but that does not prevent me from greatly enjoying her society. She is much more charming than a sincere or conscientious person could be, and she is full of really interesting conversation. She meets your eye with a congenial, understanding, inviting look, as much as to say, "You're delightful, you're clever, you know what's what—and there's a pair of us!"—which is engagingly flattering. Her life has been a fight from the start, and not a successful one; she has had disappointments, provocations, insults, poverty, everything that could exasperate and humiliate an ambitious, clever woman; but the only visible effect has been to make her better company. She is perfect

in every social accomplishment, so artificial as to seem natural. Interiorly, she may be black as tophet, hating the human race and craving its destruction; but what have we to do with that? In this world, angels would be impossible people in society; while a devil arrayed as an angel is just the thing.

But I am not justified in taking this tone about the poor lady. In all her much tried and tempted career she has never been known to make a false step. What patience, temper and purpose is indicated by that! What courage, too, never to have admitted defeat, but to be still, as the pugilists say, in the ring! And now, at full fifty years of age, she hopes to win out with her daughter. The girl is certainly a beauty, and has a voice with money in it; and there is no reason why she should not capture some Russian prince with infinite riches, and then the much-enduring, deeply planning Mabel Lyell would have her reward.

Marion has auburn hair and dark brown eyes. She is reserved, and seems satisfied with herself, for which one can't blame her; but she certainly has a temperament, and this coldness might turn out to be a mere manner of self-defense. She sang for us yesterday forenoon, touching the piano very lightly with her fingertips; and I, listening to her with Cattermole's remarks in my mind, realized for the first time that that diamond chill in her voice may be only the virgin shield which she instinctively interposes between the world and the depths within her. I can imagine, too, that were that defense once broken down, a force of passion would be born from her that would entirely transform her if it found a worthy object, and would make that voice of hers all that Cattermole wished it to be. She is quite different from her mother; there is not the least intellectual nor moral sympathy between them, but only, on Marion's part, the natural, unconsidered affection of daughter for mother. The latter, on the other hand, would sacri-

fice the girl's soul without a qualm to a "good match"—the kind she herself did not make with Chantrey. That kind of good is the only kind in which she is capable of really believing. If Marion suspects this, no doubt it would freeze her up more than ever. But I don't think she has turned her mind in that direction.

She is independent, severe, dwelling in her own thoughts, with a sort of maiden fierceness in her which sometimes hardly clothes itself in the forms of courtesy. There is a fine, strong brain packed beneath that broad, low forehead. She is taciturn and serious, saying little and smiling less. But the smile is beautiful when it comes; and what she says is never idle and foolish. I wonder if her mother will be able to spoil her!

Since her mother is not a woman to do anything without an object, I also wonder what she is here for; and it has occurred to me that possibly she may contemplate the desperate enterprise of capturing Cattermole! She is a handsome widow, looking much less than her age, and skilful in every feminine resource; no fool, either, and perhaps believing that his previous sentiment for her may be revived. Cattermole, with his apostolic simplicity, and the essential youthfulness which his selfless life has kept alive in him, full of forgiveness, too, for all human frailties, might conceivably fall into the snare. We are more apt to love those we have truly forgiven than those who forgive us. He talks with her a good deal. What a triumph for her if she succeeds! At present, and for some years past, she has, of course, been dependent, in a way, on Marion, and her manner toward her has, in consequence, been almost deferential. But if she carries off the millionaire Marion would be dethroned at once. However, the girl can take care of herself, and would be all the better for being relieved of the maternal incubus.

IV

WE walked to Bowlder Point this afternoon to see the sunset. There

were four of us—Cattermole with Mrs. Chantrey, and Marion and I. Morton Travers had ridden to the neighboring town on his bicycle. "For my part," remarked I to my companion, as we scrambled up the rocky path of the shaded glen, with the brook murmuring below, "I am old-fashioned enough to prefer walking to wheeling." As she made no rejoinder, I added: "If I could ride as well as Travers I might think differently. He is a fine fellow."

"I am glad he prefers wheeling," said she; and when I asked her why, she answered, "because I wouldn't like him beside me when I am looking at a beautiful view."

"He would distract your attention from it?" I suggested.

She did not at first reply; but presently said, curtly, "That was not what I meant."

This left me to infer that she did not like the young man, and it pleased me; for I was of the same mind about him, and I thought I had noticed that he was disposed to make advances to her. Cattermole, it is true, seemed to favor him; but I doubted whether Cattermole was a good judge of human nature; he lent to everyone from his own capital of goodness. I trusted much more in Marion's intuitions—especially as they confirmed my own.

We soon emerged on the Bowlder, the view from which was a noble one. The calm, winding river gleamed amid its dark hills, and the sun gathered gorgeous colors in the west. There was a rustic bench, on which the two women and I sat down; but Cattermole seated himself on a rock at the verge of the cliff and, taking off his hat, inhaled the cool air deeply.

"Such a scene as that teaches me that there is more good than evil in the world," said he.

"Didn't somebody say that 'Every prospect pleases, but only man is vile'?" asked Mrs. Chantrey, in her sprightly way.

"I once knew a man," said Cattermole, after a pause, "who displayed

so many fine qualities that I grew very fond of him, and trusted him completely. He was about my age, and showed deep interest in the manner I was attempting to help some unfortunate persons abroad. His practical and administrative abilities led me to place in his hands a great deal of the work of distribution. After some months I accidentally discovered that there was a serious leakage somewhere, which my investigations unexpectedly brought home to my friend. Among other things there was a forgery of my name for several thousand pounds, which could have been done by no other than by him. I confronted him with the evidence, and he could make no effective defense. I would have given a hundred times the money to have proved him innocent. But a criminal of this kind is dangerous to society, and it seemed my duty to prosecute him. He had a son, a fine young fellow with the world before him; how could I endure to blight that young career? I passed a day and a night of very severe anxiety. What would you have done, Miss Marion?" he asked, suddenly turning to her.

"I cannot answer such a question; but I am sure you forgave him," said she.

I liked that reply. If women did not prefer love to justice, what would become of us? And what Marion ascribed to Cattermole she would have done herself, in spite of her disclaimer.

"The next morning," he went on, "the man's son himself came to me. What he said amounted to this: He had been in his father's confidence; it was possible that he had committed the forgery without his father's knowledge. 'And if you bring him to trial,' he added, 'I will go on the stand and swear that I am the guilty one. Even if the jury does not convict me, it must at least give my father the benefit of the doubt.'"

Marion's eyes grew tender, and she smiled.

"I wish I knew that son," said she.

"You have your wish; he is Morton Travers," returned Cattermole.

The surprise was complete to all of us. Marion's cheeks flushed, slowly and deeply. Was she pleased or not? It is a curious question.

"But what did you do?" asked Mrs. Chantrey.

Cattermole laughed amusedly.

"Oh, I got out of it the best way I could. There was a sheep ranch of mine in New Zealand which I placed at the father's disposal; and I don't think he can do any harm there. Morton I took with me. He is an architect by profession, and I am planning with him to build a couple of blocks of good clean houses for poor people in the centre of the New York slums; the rent will be nominal, the sanitation perfect, and medical care free. But Morton could make a name and fortune for himself without aid from me. I owe him a great deal; among other things, the right to say, as I did just now, that there is more good than evil in the world!"

"Well, I'm ashamed of my quotation," remarked Mrs. Chantrey, with a sigh. "I am so glad, too—I always liked Mr. Travers immensely."

Marion rose—with some impatience, I thought—and walked over to the rock on which Cattermole was sitting. She said nothing to him, and appeared absorbed in the splendors of the setting sun; but presently I saw her put out her hand and take his in it for a moment, to his evident surprise.

On the walk home we changed partners, Mrs. Chantrey falling to me.

"What a man he is!" she exclaimed, in confidential enthusiasm, referring to our host. "And, whatever that young man's abilities may be, Mr. Cattermole evidently means to make his fortune for him. Don't you think so?"

To this I thought fit to reply: "If I were a marriageable girl, I should think Mr. Travers worth cultivating!"

V

SOMETHING strange is going on here. At present I confess myself puzzled.

During the three or four days since our walk to Boulder Point it has been my amiable function to act as the respectful observer of what I assumed to be a twofold love-making: Cattermole and Mrs. Chantrey on one hand, and Marion and Morton Travers on the other. But to-night I am like one wading in deep water and feeling mysterious and unpleasant things under his feet. What they are, I don't know, for the water is muddy.

I have fallen into the habit of getting up before breakfast and taking a walk of half a mile through the woods to a delightful little cataract which the brook makes by tumbling down a rocky declivity some thirty feet in height. I had not supposed that anyone knew of this practice of mine; but this morning, on arriving at the place, I was suddenly aware of the presence of Marion.

"Good morning, Naiad!" exclaimed I, cheerfully. "Have you come to surprise secrets from the music of my waterfall?"

But Marion was very grave. "I want to speak to you privately," she said. "I cannot speak to my mother or to Mr. Cattermole, and I am in trouble."

"And am I to understand that you prefer me as a confidant to Mr. Travers also?" I asked, still smiling.

"It is about him I wish to speak. What is your opinion of him?"

"Since Cattermole's story I have had no choice but to think him a paragon."

"Yes; how could you help it—or I!" She sat down as she spoke, and I now perceived that she was in a tremor; she was deeply agitated about something. "Mr. Cattermole is the noblest of men," she went on after a moment. "But wicked persons may take advantage of the purity and honesty of such men. Perhaps Mr. Travers really committed that crime, and his father was innocent. By pretending to protect his father, he secured himself. His father took the disgrace and went into exile rather than denounce his son."

This took away my breath. I stared

at my beautiful interlocutor in stupefaction. "My dear girl, what put that into your head?" I said at last.

"Because if the man is wicked now, I believe he was wicked then; and if he acted so nobly then, he would not act like a scoundrel now!"

This was sound logic. But what about the premises? "Has Mr. Travers been doing anything he should not?" I inquired.

She gave me an intent look, full of pain. She made an ineffective effort to speak, caught her breath, and was plainly tempted to cry, but drove the tears back. At last the words came, joltingly and ill-ordered, but their purport was plain enough.

"I had felt a prejudice against him—an instinct—at first. When Mr. Cattermole told us that thing, I was ashamed to have been so unjust. I forced myself to be pleasant to him. Besides, mother said—but that's no matter. And I thought Mr. Cattermole wished—because he and mother had been friends years ago, and he thought so much of Mr. Travers—that we should—" She made a gesture, to which I nodded comprehension. "Well, he has been saying and doing as men do—you must have seen how he has been doing. I could not like him; I tried to, but something in me fought against him in spite of myself. I hated his touch, or to have him near me, though I told myself I must be wrong. In the struggle I think I may sometimes have given him encouragement more than if I had disliked him less; but I had never wished to think of any man in that way. So he kept pushing himself forward; not delicately and reverently, but coarsely, sometimes saying things that I could have struck him for, and trying to take my hand, and even to— Ah!" she made a movement as if shaking a repulsive from her.

I was very angry by this time, but I reflected that perhaps her temperamental aversion to the fellow might have led her to put too severe a construction on his manifestations. "He is a young animal, of course," I said; "but it needn't follow that—"

"Oh, I'm only a girl of twenty," she interrupted, "but I have been on the stage, and I know how men try to flirt, and how to check them. But this was different. I must try to tell you. Yesterday evening, to escape him, I went out by the north door, and to Boulder Point alone. But he must have been on the watch, and he followed me."

Here she stopped. Her fingers were clutched together in her lap, her eyes were bent down, and I saw tears falling from them. I was seriously alarmed.

"Marion, your father could not feel more tenderly to you than I do," I said. "You need not tell me any more—if there is anything to tell. I shall understand if you are silent."

"No—no!" she cried, rising to her feet, sweeping the tears from her eyes and fixing them fiercely upon me. "Thank God, there was the precipice!"

The plashing of the waterfall—I shall never forget it!

"And you were forced to threaten that?" I asked, at length. She nodded.

We walked back to the house together slowly, consulting as we went. But the more I think over it, the more incomprehensible does it appear.

That Cattermole desires these two to marry appears certain. He spoke of love as indispensable to Marion's artistic development, and invited Morton here to meet her. He told us that story about the young man in order to incline Marion toward him. Morton's attentions toward her since then must have had Cattermole's approval, or he would have discouraged them.

On the other hand, Morton's future obviously depends on Cattermole's favor. Yet, what could more surely alienate it than his conduct last night? What, then, was his motive? Not the mad desperation of a rejected suitor, for Marion had not rejected him; he had not even offered himself to her. Since his fortune depends upon his winning her for his wife, why should he deliberately and gratuitously damn

himself by attempting her ruin? Every crime has a motive, however base the motive may be; but this crime was attempted in the teeth of the most powerful motives that could appeal to such a man—fortune and the possession of a beautiful woman. It is inconceivable, but there it stands.

Morton ought to be shot. But it is for Cattermole to deal with him. Marion would not tell him, from some chivalric feeling of reluctance to expose to him the infamy of his protégé; also, perhaps, lest it interrupt her mother's renewed romance with him. But no hesitation need deter me. Nevertheless, were I to accuse Morton to him on Marion's story alone, the fellow would deny it, and so place Marion in a disagreeable position. I wish I could get independent testimony. Possibly Morton himself may supply it inadvertently. If he finds that nothing is said, he will assume that she was silent, through fear or some other reason, and may plot a new outrage. She has put herself under my protection, and I am answerable for her safety; but something may be gained by watching the situation for a day or two. The affair is so extraordinary that there must be no opening left for making a mistake. Poor Cattermole! How little he suspects the mine beneath his feet!

VI

MORTON has not been visible to-day until late in the afternoon, when I saw him and Cattermole walking up and down the broad terrace together. They were too distant for the expression of their faces to be seen, but they appeared to be talking earnestly. My room faces the west; I have been sitting here most of the day, and as the sun declined I closed the shutters, through the slats of which I could see without being seen. On the other side of the corridor are the rooms occupied by Mrs. Chantrey and Marion; Marion had kept to herself since morning, and, though she does not know it, I have been acting as watchdog. But the situation cannot stay

much longer as it is; if Morton is not gone of his own accord by to-morrow, I mean to take an aggressive hand in the proceedings.

After a while Morton left Cattermole and came toward the house. He walked slowly, with his eyes on the ground, cutting at the daisies as he came with semicircular sweeps of his cane. He wore his bicycle dress; and certainly he is a fine figure of a man. But as he drew near he raised his face, and I never saw a blacker look than that which it bore. What were he and Cattermole talking about? It could hardly have been about the new hygienic houses in the slums; but it is still less credible that it could have been about Marion. It was the look of a man thwarted and infuriated, and ready to take some desperate resolution. Could he have been quarreling with Cattermole about anything? I suddenly pushed open the shutters and leaned out. He looked swiftly up, but the black expression did not pass from his countenance; rather it grew more set. Whatever evil there may be in this fellow, he does not bear the marks of a hypocrite. He is of the desperado type—the kind that hold up trains and rob banks, in daylight, in the West.

He passed out of sight, and presently Cattermole sauntered across the sward, taking long, meditative steps, with his hands behind him and his wide-brimmed hat on the back of his head, like some old farmer. What a contrast! He saw me from a distance, and saluted me with a playful movement of the hand. His face, as he smiled up at me, had a really seraphic look. I was almost irritated by it, considering how sinister were the conditions surrounding him. I have read somewhere that angels occasionally visit hell; they would be in peril of destruction there were it not for the protection afforded them by their own paradisaical atmosphere, which surrounds them, and which no devil can approach or breathe without suffering torments. In some such angelic way Cattermole seems to move about this earth; but I fear that lovely

expression is destined to fade from his countenance before he is many hours older. Angel and devil come to closer grip here than in the world of spirits!

He paused for a moment under my window. "Our singing bird should come out of her cage and give us the music for this lovely accompaniment of earth and sky," said he. "I fancy," he added, with a significant smile, "that the ice will be melting when we hear her next!"

This remark was so untimely that I could not restrain a grim laugh. I felt tempted to say something about ice melting under the fires of tophet as well as under the sunshine of heaven, but I kept it back. What could Morton have been telling him?

He stepped under the veranda, where I heard him greeted by the mellifluous voice of Mrs. Chantrey. Once again I was impressed by the queer notion which I experienced the first day I came here, that Cattermole is phantasmal. How is it possible for a human creature to be so unconscious of the intense human passions fighting close around him? It is grotesque—almost monstrous! In some ways his sensibility and spiritual insight appear to be exceptionally keen; yet here he is insensible! A dog perceives changes of mood in those he loves; but Cattermole, almost as superior to the common man as the latter to a dog, perceives nothing! Surely his heart should warn him. Has he, after all, no heart?

The heart is the only talisman. Did it die out of him the day Mabel Lyell broke her troth, leaving him with only an exquisite æsthetic endowment? Such a man would lack human footing in the world. As the sun falls as willingly on dunghills as on roses, so he might commit or connive at crime, because it seemed to him as alluring as virtue. The brain, untutored by the heart, has led many able souls down instead of up; hell is as full of brains as heaven. Now, whether a heartless æsthetic monstrosity of this kind did good or evil

in the world would depend on circumstances—on sheer accident!

Cattermole, for example, gains unlimited fortune at the moment his affections are outraged. His refined and civilized intelligence casts about for relief from the preoccupation of pain, and happens to picture to itself the charms of altruism. He can feed the starving, clothe the naked and play the part of Providence. Native originality leads him to eschew the beaten paths of charity; he strikes out a new path. He finds himself agreeably distracted; he is pleased and flattered. But all the while he remains blind to the moral quality of his acts; he regards them as an egregious work of art, affording him the same personal gratification as if he were to paint a picture or carve a statue. He does the outward works of neighborly love, but his inner motive is love of self.

Acts are judged by the motive the actor had in view. Suppose, instead of happening upon philanthropy, he had found it pleasant to devote fortune and faculties to the torture and destruction of his fellow-creatures. Self-indulgence would have been the motive equally in both cases, and, theoretically at least, he would be as much a devil in the one as in the other.

Practically, there might be a difference; good deeds may reflect some benefit on the doer, even though he does them mechanically. But the point is that, being guided by no true religious principle, he may at any moment exchange benevolence for crime, without being himself conscious of the change. All he seeks being gratification, why should he avoid one means of attaining it more than another? In fact, how do I know that he has not, during these twenty years of invisibility, done as much mischief as good? I have taken him at his own valuation, or, more truly, at the valuation which my imagination placed upon his ambiguous confidences. I mistrusted him at first; afterward, I yielded to a fascination, mingled with memories

of our youthful intimacies. But I know nothing about him, except that, in this crisis, he has failed to show a human comprehension of the situation.

But, pshaw! These speculations are fantastic. I am allowing my fad of psychological analysis to lead me into treason to friendship. Cattermole simply does not understand the wickedness of the world; his thoughts are set on a love match for Marion and Morton and on his sanitary dwellings in the slums, and he has eyes for naught else. The revelation will shock him; but he is not to blame. The question is, what will he do?

VII

MRS. CHANTREY made the usual feminine apologies for Marion's absence from dinner, and covered the defection by giving us an entertaining account of the girl's first appearance on the stage, the events and intrigues leading up thereto, and the final triumph. She made it appear—which is, doubtless, true—that the appearance might never have come off but for her own tact and *savoir faire*; but forestalled criticism by the concluding remark: "After all, what would anything else have amounted to but for the dear child's own marvelous gift?"

Cattermole listened with a dreamy smile. Then he pushed his long hair from his forehead and leaned back in his chair, letting his strangely glowing eyes rest upon Morton, opposite, upon whose brows the shadow of the afternoon was still dark.

"And yet she is but on the threshold," said he. "Art is the manifestation of a divine life in us; but the human instrument must be fully developed before the divine energy can adequately possess and use it. Art is born of a connubial intercourse between the spiritual mind and its material environment—the joys, sorrows, hopes and fears, passions and regrets, arising from association with our fellows. The artist must never submit his free limbs to the shackles

of orthodoxy in life and morals. He must admit to his soul the broadest experiences of the race. To him, poison is nourishment as well as bread, sin and pain as well as goodness and pleasure, because he does not recognize the conventional verdict upon these elements of experience, but perceives all of them alike to be necessary ingredients in the grand diapason of mortal existence. The conventional moralist is a creature of fears and servilities. Dreading lest the wrath of an imagined tyrant of heaven shut him out from the rewards of a cringing virtue, he brazenly denies the instincts of that nature which the infinite love of his Creator freely bestowed upon him. He lets I dare not wait upon I would; he wraps in a dastardly napkin the talent which was entrusted to him to open an unrestricted intercourse with the world. The artist is infinitely above so groveling a view of his obligations. He is something more than a flat surface and a hackneyed outline; in him are depths, heights, shadows as well as lights, ever varying contours, shifting hues, soul and substance. He absorbs his surroundings, interprets and organizes them, and vindicates their divine source by reproducing them in forms of immortal beauty. The artist is man as God meant all men to be; but no moralist can be an artist, or ever could produce a work of art."

At this point my native amiability gave way.

"Upon my word, Cattermole," I exclaimed, "I'm glad Marion is beyond earshot of your eloquence. What you say means that license is man's duty and path to heaven. Our highest faculties are to be developed by indulging our basest propensities. The *debauché* and the criminal are God's only perfect work, and works of art can be created only by moral degenerates. Well, all the works of art I've seen bore internal evidence of victory over every self-seeking and unneighborly instinct of our nature. They were pure as water lilies, and their message, whether given through

the medium of picture, statue, temple, poem or symphony, was that good and truth are supreme. What other basis can beauty have?"

My emphasis would, perhaps, have been less had not my emotions been of late so tried. Cattermole did not seem disturbed, but Mrs. Chantrey, who, to do her justice, did not, I think, comprehend or care for the merits of the discussion, gathered from my stridency that harmony was lacking somewhere, and sought to restore it by saying, tranquilly:

"Most artists I've known in society were delightful people. In society, of course, all one asks is outward conformity; if the artistic temperament, under the rose, takes an occasional airing beyond the bounds of strict propriety, we forgive it in gratitude for their art."

It was on the tip of my angry tongue to ask her whether she included her own daughter under this tolerant judgment; but what is the use of arguing with society people?

"Whatever specific acts the artist may happen to commit," remarked the unruffled Cattermole, "he can never be charged with crime, baseness or selfishness, because his motive is always culture, which aims to create the immortal good and fair. Motive always qualifies acts; they have no intrinsic quality. Technical crimes and vices cease to be such when they have in view the deepening or elevation of the artistic faculty. Therefore, moral opprobrium can never attach to the artist; the law of his being is not license, nor is it duty; it is spontaneity. As for your water lily, is not its purity born of the black mud of the river bottom? But all I'm driving at is, that Marion will be a greater singer—the greatest of singers, I believe—when her nature has been mellowed and enriched by experience—meaning by that word a somewhat broader and less restrained intercourse with the human side of life than is commonly deemed prudent for young unmarried women."

This astounded me; it suggested possibilities that I could not trust my-

self to think of. "To assert that an artist, or anybody else, may commit sin without being a sinner is, to my mind, to talk something much worse than rubbish," I said, between my teeth. "I'm sorry to be so explicit, Cattermole; but perhaps you don't know my provocation. Come, Mr. Travers," I continued, turning upon him with a murderous smile, "why are you silent this evening? I'm sure you agree with your patron; hadn't you better say so?"

He met my challenging gaze with a look of sullen reserve. "I'm not an expert in transcendental discussions," he said, in his sharp, crisply enunciated tones. "I have heard that artists were born, not made; but if Mr. Cattermole thinks that they ought to be made as well, I dare say he's right."

What might have been said or done next I don't know, but at this juncture we were interrupted by the sound of music from the drawing-room; and after a moment's pause we rose by a common impulse and went in there.

VIII

THE piano stood at the end of the room, in a deep and wide embrasure banked up with flowers. Marion, seated at it, had her back toward us. She was dressed in black, and out of the soft ruching her smooth white neck rose erect and pure, with the mass of her auburn hair above it. She did not turn at our entrance, but continued to play an irregular movement, with risings and subsidences like the complainings of the wind before a storm. There was something ominous in the sound, with interwoven moanings of passion and pain. Morton Travers took a seat by himself on the right; I sat near Mrs. Chantrey on the left, and Cattermole stalked up to the arch of the embrasure, against the side of which he leaned, with arms folded and head bent, a striking figure.

The music was evidently impromptu; but Marion perfectly com-

manded the instrument, and was able to give immediate expression to the emotions that were struggling in her soul. I now felt, as I never before had in her case, the power of the highest musical art, and realized how it may lift the performer out of and above herself and, by exalting individual feelings to universal proportions, interpret and ennoble it. Fortunately for Marion, in this crisis, she was able to avail herself of the consolation that the divine wisdom of music alone can afford. For great music is divine wisdom—the divine wisdom of divine love, through which we may perceive the atonement of creature with Creator. It is a language too charged with meaning and too catholic to be articulate; the hearts of myriads may find expression in it, each different from the rest. The source of man's evil and suffering is his finiteness; but man has also his infinite side; his life is wrought out of the conflict between the two; music avouches the harmony in which the discords are lost and blended, which survives and reigns over them. Every true musical composition—nay, every work of genuine art of whatever kind—unveils to man the glorious vision of his own immortality, in the sweep of whose illimitable arc the petty divergences and discrepancies of time are reconciled.

With the instinct of the artist, Marion, when her burden was no longer personally supportable, had fled to the protection of this mighty, impersonal friend, as another might have sought support in prayer. She prayed through her music. As she went on, the groping and distressful cadences became fewer, and streams of strength and faith flowed in, bringing into view profound symmetries, defining exquisite interior structural graces, and expressing lovely traceries of outward beauty. The immortal soul was overcoming its mortal impediments, and uplifting us along with it in its august triumph; for it seemed to me, glancing from face to face, that each of us, in his or her degree, was undergoing a subtle transformation. There

is no gauging the influence of this mysterious sovereign of earth and sky.

Then the vibrations of the accompanying strings grew faint, and with a thrill of penetrating pleasure I heard the far-off coming of the diviner voice.

It was Marion's voice, yet a voice which neither I nor any other had ever heard till then. Cattermole observed the change at once, and lifted his head with a strange look, passing from Marion to Morton and then reverting to her. Morton did not respond; for some moments past he had seemed to be oblivious to his surroundings; he sat with his head thrown back on the cushion of the divan, his handsome, hard face fully exposed, with an expression upon it which my fancy compared with that of some sinister young Roman emperor, a Caligula or Domitian, awaiting the coming of the slaves appointed to kill him, while at the same time arose before his mind a vision of the lost beauty and glory of the life he might have led. When Marion began to sing he altered his position slightly, until by degrees his black gaze was fixed upon her, and he leaned forward, drawing a long breath at intervals. As for Mrs. Chantrey, she seemed more moved by the effect of the singing upon Morton and Cattermole than by the singing itself. But nothing else is so nearly extinct as the soul of a woman of the world and of society who has spent her life in the sturdy sacrifice of truth, honor and generosity for the sake of social rewards.

What the song was that Marion sang, or whether she sang words at all, I did not know at the time, and have not determined since; though, if words there were, I should hazard that they were German. But after a few bars I became satisfied that she was, at that place and time, the greatest of singers. Her method was always excellent; but now it came freighted with such a warbling and soaring splendor of sound as never before had blessed my ears. The genius or gift

of a human life culminates at a given psychological moment and quivers on the borders of the infinite; it may not sustain that height, or perhaps again attain it, but humanity has been satisfied, and the image of God vindicated. I felt, as I listened, that I was hearing what could be heard but once, and that the wisdom of sages and of centuries could not illuminate the hidden places of existence as did the voice of this girl. We elders had argued and wrangled across the dinner table just now, and had but darkened counsel. Perfect beauty, while we are under its influence, solves riddles and removes mountains, though it is true that we cannot maintain of ourselves the heights to which it lifts us. Could we stay in the heaven to which music bears us, the Golden Age would shine round us always; but it gives the glorious glimpse only as an inspiration, and we must climb for ourselves, helped only by the memory of beauty.

Here, then, was the voice to which nations must do homage; a voice born of the breaking up of the deeps in the girl's soul and the rousing into consciousness of hitherto slumbering faculties and perceptions. This was what Cattermole had professed to desire; but he could not pretend that it had been attained by such means as he had suggested. So long as the spell was on me—the spiritual enlargement and exhilaration—I yielded myself to them; but when she ceased, and the hands that had controlled the keys dropped in her lap, I could speculate how the event would affect the questionable understanding which, I suspected, existed between Cattermole and Morton. The situation had become more extraordinary.

Marion swung slowly round on the music stool and faced us.

IX

"A FEW days ago," Cattermole said, drawing up a chair and seating himself near her, "a young girl came here with a charming talent; now, in her place, is a great artist, whom it

would be presumptuous to praise. How has the miracle happened?"

"You know all I can tell you; you have heard me sing," was Marion's reply, quietly meeting his eyes.

"You ask explanations, Cattermole; why don't you give them?" demanded I, resolved that Marion should not be forced from her true position in the matter.

He smiled. "Oh, I am willing to concede my error, so far as this instance goes," said he. "I did but wish to afford nature an opportunity; but Marion seems to have captured the treasure independently of the means I had supplied for the purpose."

"What means?" asked Marion, in a low but imperious tone.

"The great, universal means, that rules the world and changes it. You were the princess of the fairy tale, who had all the other gifts, but lacked the greatest of all, without which the others lost their value."

But she held him to the point. "You planned something?"

For the first time in my knowledge Cattermole appeared embarrassed. The clear regard of the girl's intent brown eyes appeared to be more than he could sustain. And yet his share in the transaction—apart from his vicious philosophizing about it at dinner—had been innocent enough. He had but furnished the princess with a trial prince. It was the latter who ought to feel embarrassed.

"Why, my dear child," put in Mrs. Chantrey, gallantly coming to her host's assistance, "one would fancy, from your tone, that to invite young folks to meet each other was a solecism, instead of a kindness. I'm sure we are much indebted to Mr. Cattermole for introducing Mr. Travers to us; and we hope he won't let us lose sight of him."

"If you two could have learned to care for each other, I won't deny that it would have gratified me," Cattermole now said. "If it was a liberty, can you pardon it?"

"That would be nothing," she said, and paused. I thought she was

going to look at Travers; but she continued to address Cattermole. "I'll tell you something—because it is all changed now; it is as if I spoke of another person, not myself. Before coming here, I thought I should never care for anyone. I did not wish to; I wished to love only my music. But when I had been here a little while I thought there was one man I could care for, if he cared for me. But I knew he would not, except, perhaps, as a man would care for his daughter. That was as near as love could ever come to me."

Mrs. Chantrey half started from her chair and fell back with a gasp. It was certainly trying for her; but nobody thought of her just then. Cattermole was like one before whose face a spirit passes and the hair of his flesh stands up. He stared rigidly at Marion, and one hand slowly rose, as if to arrest the flight of some incredible marvel which had brushed him with its wings, only to escape him forever. In the midst of my own amazement I was sorry for him. He had meddled with destiny, and he had his reward! I little knew what was still to be revealed.

She had not finished. "A terrible thing happened to me," she said. "It need not be told. It was like breathing poison; something died in me. The girl I was, with that dream she had, was gone. But I came to myself after a while as I am now, and shall always be. My music saved me, though I had broken faith with it. It is here still," she added, putting her hand on her bosom with that rare smile, like fragrance from a flower—a smile that made tears gush to my eyes.

She went on after a moment: "I would not have spoken of this foolish thing if it were not like something that had never been, and to ask your pardon for it. But I still feel that you are a man whom it is an honor to know—a truly good and noble man; so what you seemed to say just now about planning something troubled me. You did not mean—did you?—that you had suggested to—" she would not

look at Travers, but she extended one arm in the direction where he sat—"him, that he should make any advances to me?"

Now was the moment for me to interpose. "Marion," said I, rising, "you must let me escort you and your mother out of the room. I have some business to talk with these gentlemen which you would best not listen to."

Morton Travers jumped up, walked to the half open door, and closed it. Then he faced round and confronted us.

"No one will leave this room till I have had my say," said he.

"Morton!" said Cattermole, in a warning voice.

But the young man was as little to be controlled as an Indian running amuck. His face was hard as flint and coldly savage. He looked at Cattermole with hatred and contempt.

"I'm done with you," said he. "You have experimented once too often. After I've spoken my piece, you can do as you like. You think you know it all," he added, glancing at me, "but you don't yet know Mr. Cattermole. After I have explained him, Miss Chantrey can judge whether he is a truly good and noble man, whom it's an honor to know! That was the straw that broke my back. I'm not going to ask your forgiveness, Miss Chantrey; but you have made me feel something to-night. If I had felt toward you as I do now, when this man"—nodding toward Cattermole—"proposed his experiment to me, I'd have strangled him like a cat!"

He put out his powerful right arm and clenched the fingers suggestively. Cattermole watched him closely, but with a touch of amusement, I fancied. "Be succinct, my dear Morton," he said, lightly, "and then open the door and tell the man to bring in coffee."

The other leaned his shoulders against the door and put his hands in his pockets. "Your story about the forgery was a lie. My father died before I entered college. I was one of your experiments. You picked me up and petted and flattered me; you laid

the trap for me—I fell into it; you confronted me with the proofs—and I had the choice between going to State's prison and becoming your Man Friday. You are fond of experimenting with human nature, as you put it, and you and I have done some very shady things in our time, Cattermole. I was very useful to you in setting up the game for you to bring down. I took all the risks, and you had all the sport. Your pay was good, and I have no excuses to make. But it is just as well for all concerned that this last affair miscarried."

"Cattermole," said I, "these women must not hear any more. Is anything that he's saying true?"

"If I attempted to tell the story, I might give it a little different complexion; but it may go as it is," he replied, pushing his fingers through his hair and smiling at me. "Yes, I've been a Diogenes, searching, in my own way, for an honest man or woman. But I am getting tired of the occupation, like my able young assistant here; the issue of our experiments has been too monotonous. I am by no means a harsh judge of human frailty; in my opinion, sin is an important and interesting element in life, and not without its amiable side. We can't get rid of it, and, if we are wise, we shall cease some time to persecute it as we do. It is the persecution that does most of the mischief. It necessitates hypocrisy, which is, after all, the least palatable of our evils. But no matter now! Yes, Miss Chantrey, I did have an understanding with Mr. Travers concerning you, and it was not like most of my experiments: there was a little personal feeling mixed up with it. I had borne a grudge against your excellent mother on account of a youthful jest which she played on me. I ought to be ashamed of myself for remembering it so many years; but it made a considerable difference in my life. I knew it would be impossible to touch her by any personal attack, but it occurred to me that I might reach her through you. I had not then had the pleasure of meeting you, and I will

also say—more to spare your feelings than my own—that I had not contemplated any such clumsy brutality as I am told occurred at Boulder Point. Had it any other issue than it had, I should never have forgiven myself. I do not blame my Man Friday," he added, pleasantly, "but he failed to catch the spirit of my instructions; or perhaps the manifest hopelessness of carrying them out put him beside himself."

"Put what you like on me; there will be enough left for you!" said Morton, grimly.

"We will bear each other's burdens," returned the other, in a friendly manner. "But I have one more remark to make. I am an old man—not so much in years as in feelings. I cannot look back on much that gives me pleasure, and I look forward to nothing. But the music that came from your throat to-day, Miss Chantrey—whatever influence created it—has made me wish that there may be a home where love and truth and beauty may dwell together eternally, with no experimenters or mischief-makers to disturb them. And the statement of your momentary attitude toward me, which took me entirely by surprise, gave me a sensation which I would not exchange for any bribe, material or spiritual; and, nevertheless, I would not wish to inflict the pain of it upon my deadliest enemy. These two events, my dear young lady, must explain anything inconsistent or unexpected in my present behavior. I am not the man I was an hour ago. I accept your detestation with relief and eagerness; I only wish your heart could make it a thousandfold bitterer and more unrelenting than it is."

"We have had enough of this," said I. "I shall make arrangements to take these ladies away to-night, Cattermole. You have murdered yourself."

He threw back his head with a soft laugh that recalled to me the days of his young manhood, when he often laughed in that way.

Then he came forward toward Mor-

ton Travers, still standing at the door. "There are the keys of my desk," he said, taking the bunch from his pocket; "you will find there the papers which have caused you so much anxiety. I have no further use for them, or for you." I presume he referred to documents establishing the charge of forgery. "And now," he added, with a sudden air of sharp authority, which made the sullen athlete start and cringe, "open the door and let my guests pass out!"

The latter proceedings had been accompanied by the almost total collapse of Mrs. Chantrey, whose great social talents did not fit her to sustain such scenes; she leaned so heavily on my arm, and her groans were so unbecoming, that I felt sure she was, perhaps for the first time in her life since childhood, acting very much as she felt.

Marion, whose silence had been one of the most impressive features in the terrible scene, and who had borne herself through it as a sad young angel might, reluctantly but inevitably sitting there in judgment, walked out with her head erect, her eyes cast down. There was some

mighty source of strength in her pure young nature. Why should I not say that God protects His own, and bears them safe through perils and trials that bring the profane to shipwreck? She went out, not glancing to the right or left, though she was full of mercy. Travers followed us at a distance, but Cattermole remained alone.

After getting Mrs. Chantrey upstairs, her condition became such that, after an hour's efforts, it was plain that she could not leave the house that night. I went down to speak to Cattermole. The lights had not been turned down in the drawing-room, so I went in there. He was sitting at the piano, with his head resting on his arms upon the keyboard. He was dead. The symptoms were those of heart failure; but I knew that he was a man skilled in poisons. His features were tranquil, and looked reverend, amid his white hair.

I heard a sigh behind me, and, turning, saw Marion, who had followed me. Beyond, in the shadow of the doorway, lurked the figure of Morton Travers, with his papers in his hand. They were like the good and the evil angel, waiting for the dead man's soul.



THE SAME EFFECT

"IT is very odd," remarked Mr. Hubbub, "that in Africa there is a tribe which cannot wear clothes at all. Clothes make them sick. Isn't it strange, dear?"

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Hubbub. "The same thing happens in this country also."

"Oh, surely not. I never heard of such a thing in civilized countries."

"Well, Mr. Hubbub, I can tell you that even in this great and glorious land the same phenomenon is by no means unknown. When I see Mrs. Poindexter coming out every month or so with a fine new outfit from head to foot, her clothes make me sick—make me sick, I say, Mr. Hubbub—when I reflect that you are just as able to buy me new clothes as Mr. Poindexter is to buy them for his wife, and *don't*."

And Mrs. Hubbub dissolved in tears.

A MODERN MOTHER

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LADY DULCENT
 LORD ALFRED (HER SON)
 AVIS CHISHOLM

SCENE I

A villa at Cannes. Pretty drawing-room. Lady Dulcent, forty-eight, very handsome, dressed in a tea-gown of great elegance, is reclining on an ottoman smoking a cigarette. Lord Alfred, her son, in white flannels and straw hat, is standing before the mantel-piece, his hands in his pockets.

LADY DULCENT

"What is the matter, Alfred? You look dreadfully pulled."

ALFRED

"I am—er—pulled."

LADY DULCENT

"What's up now?"

LORD ALFRED

"It's deuced disagreeable."

LADY DULCENT (*sighing*)

"Don't waste words, my child, and my time. I must dress for the yacht."

LORD ALFRED (*fretfully*)

"Oh, if you are in a hurry it is all up."

LADY DULCENT (*shaking ashes from her thumb*)

"I mean I must dress by-and-by—we dine on board. Out with it."

LORD ALFRED

"Molly is making an ass of herself, and I am in a scrape——"

LADY DULCENT

"Again?"

LORD ALFRED (*glaring*)

"What do you mean by again? Ever since my marriage I have been——"

LADY DULCENT

"Exemplary! Is that what you have come to tell your Mumsie?"

LORD ALFRED

"I wish you'd stop chaffing; this is awfully serious."

LADY DULCENT

"Why, I am serious."

LORD ALFRED (*under his breath*)

"So is Molly."

LADY DULCENT

"I simply can't do anything more with her. These American girls, under all their pretensions and worldliness, refuse to enter the marriage state unadvisedly and lightly, as the church tells them to."

LORD ALFRED (*smiling*)

"She has got a fit of the tragics."

LADY DULCENT (*earnestly*)

"And *all* the money. You behave well about that, Alf. She must admit it."

LORD ALFRED

"I am not a cad."

LADY DULCENT (*sighing*)

"Well! what is it? what is it? She won't pay your card debts?"

LORD ALFRED

"Nothing of the sort. I haven't any—I mean—just now—no—she's jealous."

LADY DULCENT (*impassively*)

"Poor little thing!"

LORD ALFRED

"Oh, you can pity her, but I tell you what, a jealous woman is the devil."

LADY DULCENT

"Naturally."

LORD ALFRED

"Humph!"

LADY DULCENT

"*Avec cause*, I presume?"

LORD ALFRED

"Hang it! What's a man to do with a girl always under his nose?"

LADY DULCENT

"Ah, I begin to perceive; she is jealous of her friend from America?"

LORD ALFRED

"She is simply ruining the girl."

LADY DULCENT (*aside*)

"I am glad it was not already done."

LORD ALFRED (*becoming excited*)

"She is telling dreadful stories of her. She says she is a viper she has nursed in her bosom, and all that sort of thing, don't you know; a bad girl; my——"

LADY DULCENT

"Mistress?"

LORD ALFRED

"Well, it's a lie."

LADY DULCENT

"Such things always are."

LORD ALFRED

"Mother, look here. The girl's an angel."

LADY DULCENT

"Of course."

LORD ALFRED

"And I want you——"

LADY DULCENT

"To help you."

LORD ALFRED

"No, to help her."

LADY DULCENT (*with arched brows*)

"Remain one?"

LORD ALFRED

"I am in a horrid box."

LADY DULCENT

"Molly is very pig-headed."

LORD ALFRED (*groaning*)

"Ugh!"

LADY DULCENT

"If she only would amuse herself!"

LORD ALFRED (*scowling*)

"Eh?"

LADY DULCENT (*shouting as if to deafness*)

"I say, if she only would amuse herself. Have lovers——"

LORD ALFRED (*with fatuity*)

"She is dead in love with me."

LADY DULCENT

"Men always think that."

LORD ALFRED

"I know it."

LADY DULCENT (*aside*)

"How like his father!"

LORD ALFRED

"What did you say?"

LADY DULCENT

"I said you were exactly like your papa."

LORD ALFRED

"Whom should I be like?"

LADY DULCENT (*reflectively*)

"I don't know——"

LORD ALFRED

"Can't you help the girl? Don't you see the fuss I'm in? A guest in my house, a regular little beauty, no money, her future spoiled through my wife's horrid insinuations."

LADY DULCENT

"How far did it go?"

LORD ALFRED (*measuring his little finger end*)

"Not that."

LADY DULCENT

"Hum! Hum!"

LORD ALFRED

"Why always believe the worst of a fellow?"

LADY DULCENT (*mockingly*)

"The wise philosopher must know the depth of the wound he is called to heal. (*Aside.*) To be sure, Alf was always truthful."

LORD ALFRED

"Bother!"

LADY DULCENT (*suddenly serious, throws away her cigarette, sits up, frowns slightly*)

"Alfred, I have a most odd thing to tell you."

LORD ALFRED (*distract*)

"I wish you'd stick to the point this once, just for two minutes."

LADY DULCENT

"For ten. But this is about your affairs. First of all, what do you expect me to do?"

LORD ALFRED

"Give the girl your hand—you are so clever."

LADY DULCENT

"Of course, it looks nasty for you. Gentlemen don't wrong their wives' girl friends; it is dreadfully old-fashioned. The *seducteur* is picturesque but obsolete—only a Maurel could make him live for an hour. If Molly is in love with her own husband she is up to date. Marital infidelity has gone out, too, with the bustle and big sleeves, and something else has come in——"

LORD ALFRED

"I tell you it is a lie, and a damned one. I haven't said 'boo' to the girl."

LADY DULCENT

"Nevertheless, I must take an inventory of the *ou dis*. We have had enough scandals in our family; I am sick of them. I want my children to be—er——"

LORD ALFRED

"You said——"

LADY DULCENT

"I had something to tell you. Who do you think has just been here?"

LORD ALFRED

"How can I tell?" (*Lights a cigar.*)

LADY DULCENT

"Stavordale!"

LORD ALFRED (*without enthusiasm*)

"Patrice told me they were here."

LADY DULCENT

"They anchored last night with the Russians; and now comes my story."

LORD ALFRED (*impatiently*)

"What?"

LADY DULCENT

"He is after your girl—crazy; wants the banns published at once; nothing will do but the altar; will take her, stories or no stories; came to me—er—to confide."

LORD ALFRED (*angrily*)

"The deuce he did!"

LADY DULCENT (*sotto voce*)

"He doesn't like it."

LORD ALFRED

"Eh?"

LADY DULCENT

"Nothing."

LORD ALFRED

"He is an ass."

LADY DULCENT

"Look here, Alf, don't. Stavordale is just what we want, and the fact that his mother's father lined her pockets by brewing ale for a thirsty world makes things easier; he has piles of money."

LORD ALFRED (*testily*)

"I ask you to help me out of a scrape, to lift up a poor girl whose only fault is she trusted—er—Molly."

LADY DULCENT

"Molly?"

LORD ALFRED

"And you only laugh at me."

LADY DULCENT

"Shall I ask her to stop here? You know my rooms will be all full this week."

LORD ALFRED

"I can put up a couple of your men."

LADY DULCENT

"We can't be all hens here. Let me tell you, Alf—I will take her on one condition."

LORD ALFRED

"And that is——?"

LADY DULCENT

"That you leave Cannes to-morrow and let me manage everything. If you interfere——"

LORD ALFRED (*moodily*)

"What about?"

LADY DULCENT

"Don't be a goose. She must marry Stavordale."

LORD ALFRED

"I know she'll refuse."

LADY DULCENT

"No, she won't."

LORD ALFRED

"Why do you think not?"

LADY DULCENT

"He has too much to offer."

LORD ALFRED

"It makes me sick the way women talk."

LADY DULCENT (*laughing*)

"Hear him, O ye gods!"

LORD ALFRED

"Why need she marry anybody? If you will only help; be jolly and nice, as you can be, Mumsie, and have her for a week till her step-mother arrives——"

LADY DULCENT

"Heavens! Shall I have to put up the step-mother, too? I can't make a camp out of this little place."

LORD ALFRED

"Of course not. (*Sadly.*) They're going back to America."

LADY DULCENT (*sotto voce*)

"That's fortunate. I see Alf has been making love to the girl, and Molly is furious; and she has a tongue of her own, my daughter-in-law, and can wag it, and Alf can't afford to quarrel with his wife. How silly she is to care! When one doesn't care it's easy. Why do people want to marry? I call marriage a killed hope. Hope is the best thing going, and when one marries it cracks in two—*tout est fini*. Whew! I'm getting blue and sentimental." (*Hums.*)

LORD ALFRED (*uneasily*)

"Will you write to her?"

LADY DULCENT

"How do you spell the name?"

LORD ALFRED (*flushing*)

"Avis Chisholm. (*Spells.*) A-v-i-s. C-h-i—quite plain."

LADY DULCENT

"Quite. I hope there have been no letters."

LORD ALFRED (*sheepishly*)

"A couple of notes. Nothing."

LADY DULCENT

"I *thought* as much. I'll ask her to come up for a chat. She can't refuse an old woman. I met her once."

LORD ALFRED (*wearily*)

"They're awfully proud—Americans, you know—touchy."

LADY DULCENT

"Fancy! I had not imagined it. I thought they were shovers."

LORD ALFRED

"Well, they are."

LADY DULCENT

"Shovers?"

LORD ALFRED

"No, proud."

LADY DULCENT

"I hope she won't eat me. She's

made trouble enough. I say, Alf, why don't they stop at home?"

LORD ALFRED

"Beastly hole, New York."

LADY DULCENT (*vaguely*)

"Isn't there anything else? Country? I'm going over next Spring."

LORD ALFRED

"There's Newport."

LADY DULCENT

"A suburb?"

LORD ALFRED (*smiling*)

"Hardly. By the way, Mumsie, while you are at it, can't you muzzle Molly?"

LADY DULCENT

"I'll advise her."

LORD ALFRED

"What?"

LADY DULCENT

"To have lovers. It's old-fashioned, but may be useful."

LORD ALFRED

"Look here; what rot, don't you know."

LADY DULCENT

"She's good looking. Now go away, that's a dear; I must dress."
(*Exit.*)

LORD ALFRED

"Mumsie's a tramp, under her chatter. She'll pull me through, as she always has everybody else. Awfully good of her to take Avis. She must hate it, but she never did the selfish since I've known her."

SCENE II

The next day. Same villa, same drawing-room. Lady Dulcent in her riding habit. Miss Avis Chisholm: tall, slender, graceful, very pretty. Light summer costume, large black hat.

LADY DULCENT

"How do you do, my dear?"

AVIS (*coldly*)

"You wish to see me?"

LADY DULCENT

"Yes. We must have a great deal to say to each other."

AVIS

"Why?"

LADY DULCENT (*aside*)

"It is going to be difficult; she is not pliant. (*Aloud.*) Why, because we have the same tastes; we ride, swim, pull a boat."

AVIS (*unbending from rigidity and showing pretty teeth*)

"I like exercise."

LADY DULCENT

"I want you to come and pass a few days here—Molly——"

AVIS (*haughtily*)

"Thanks! my step-mother arrives in a few days and——"

LADY DULCENT

"Shall you then go back to New York?"

AVIS (*with heat*)

"I hope so."

LADY DULCENT

"Don't you like Cannes?"

AVIS

"I abhor it."

LADY DULCENT

"Fancy!"

AVIS

"I have been unhappy here."

LADY DULCENT (*kindly*)

"I hope my son has not done anything while you were in his house to annoy you—he is thoughtless."

AVIS (*blushing*)

"What has he told you?"

LADY DULCENT

"That his wife is jealous—you see, I go right to the point—and I sent for you to say——"

AVIS (*bitterly*)

"Oh, I am sure you are most kind."

LADY DULCENT

"Did he make love to you?"

AVIS

(Silence.)

LADY DULCENT

"But there is another who——"

AVIS *(with agitation)*

"I cannot stay angry with Molly; we were friends since childhood. I think of going to the inn with my maid and waiting there for mamma. She has been most unkind—Molly, I mean. I am terribly placed. I had decided yesterday—but to-day some people have arrived."

LADY DULCENT

"Stavordale and his party. Yes."

AVIS

"Ah, you knew? That man pursues me; it makes it dreadful for me at an inn, without a chaperon, and that old cat, the Princess von Armath, in the house, with her tongue."

LADY DULCENT

"Yes, I have noticed—she doesn't leave that at home. *(Decidedly.)* My child, you will come straight to me."

AVIS *(bursts into tears)*

LADY DULCENT

"Dear, dear!"

AVIS *(weeping)*

"I have done nothing."

LADY DULCENT *(helpfully)*

"I am sure not. *(Aside.)* She doesn't look like a mongrel."

AVIS

"I have an unhappy home."

LADY DULCENT *(cheerfully)*

"That is not uncommon." *(Lights a cigarette.)*

AVIS

"I hate to speak about it to strangers, but my father is dead and I have only my stepmother, who is but two years older than I am, and I don't think she likes it."

LADY DULCENT

"Naturally, my dear, it must be a great bore to have a daughter one's own age."

AVIS *(laughing, drying away tears)*

"I suppose it is."

LADY DULCENT

"Now, child, stop crying and listen to me. There is one way of escape. Molly has—chattered; Von Armath has gossiped, but there is somebody who doesn't care for chatter or listen to gossip."

AVIS

"Why should he? It is abominable; no American would listen to it for a moment."

LADY DULCENT

"Well, I don't know. Stavordale is a man among a million. Not handsome, I admit, but what else is amiss? Manly, excellent, clever in his line, a very pretty fortune, and will some day make you a duchess. He is a man who never wounds a woman—he is worth ten Alfreds."

AVIS *(makes a movement)*

LADY DULCENT

"Yes. I can say this, though I love my son. Age comes to us, my child, and then one must have consideration. What is there left? Wealth and position give it. What else is there?"

AVIS *(tentatively)*

"Religion."

LADY DULCENT

"Perhaps, but it is much easier to have both religion and philosophy when one is—er—comfortable as to income."

AVIS

"I will tell you the truth."

LADY DULCENT

"That will be the best."

AVIS

"I have refused Stavordale."

LADY DULCENT

"He told me as much. How wild of you!"

AVIS *(surprised)*

"He told you? How strange!"

LADY DULCENT

"Why, our men are like children, they whimper over lost sweets. He made a clean breast of it. But he is ready to be whistled back."

AVIS

"I never change my mind."

LADY DULCENT

"That is not necessary. Resolutions are more easily changed than states of mind."

AVIS (*waveringly*)

"I respect him."

LADY DULCENT

"Nonsense! Stavordale is worth more than that. It is inconceivable you do not see it. Why, he isn't one of those dreadful creatures one marries out of pity! If he were, I wouldn't advise him for you. That is the worst sort of marriage; you see, when you have removed the pity, you're married, and there you are. I never recommend that sort of thing. What can Alfred offer you? At best a compromising flirtation; at the worst, to leave his wife for you, and he can't; he hasn't a *sou* except the little I can scrape up for him, and it's always spent beforehand. You are too proud to accept the sacrifice."

AVIS (*almost sternly*)

"You think Stavordale loves me?"

LADY DULCENT (*seeing her advantage*)

"My dear, he is quite mad about you, and we women all want to be loved with passion. Mild affection is a poor reward for the pain of child-bearing and the dullness of existence."

AVIS (*aside*)

"Adieu, my dreams!"

LADY DULCENT (*with a ravishing glance*)

Can I bid him hope?"

AVIS (*resolutely*)

"Yes."

LADY DULCENT (*catching her to her breast*)

"Kiss me, my child. (*They kiss.*) I fear Alfred has been a very naughty

boy, but you see, my dear, I excuse him—you are terrifically pretty."

AVIS (*sadly*)

"And now for that tiresome Stavordale."

LADY DULCENT

"The Earl of Stavordale tiresome!"

AVIS (*with dignity*)

"I have to think of myself, not of him."

LADY DULCENT

"With men, my dear, that is the wiser course. I have always believed Americans were clever."

AVIS

"How *sweet* you are!"

LADY DULCENT

"No, not sweet; I am charitable. A suspicious virtue; to be easily scandalized, like the Von Armath is accepted as a test of one's virtue. I am looked upon with distrust because I am never shocked."

SCENE III

Later, in the garden. Lord Alfred; Avis Chisholm.

LORD ALFRED

"So—it's good-bye!"

AVIS

"It is good-bye."

LORD ALFRED

"Did you ever care for me, Avis?"

AVIS

"Why?"

LORD ALFRED

"Little girl, I have never kissed you. May I once—just once?"

AVIS (*coldly*)

"No."

LORD ALFRED

"And is this your last word?"

AVIS

"My last."

LORD ALFRED

"And shall you marry Stavordale?"

AVIS (*indifferently*)

"I shall marry Stavordale."

LORD ALFRED

"What an icicle you have been to me! You never cared."

AVIS (*passionately*)

"You are hideously cruel. I loved—I love you. But your mother is right—she has saved her son. Yes, coward that you are, I loved you! I could have ruined your peace and Molly's, I could have dragged you after me, for you are weak enough to abandon her."

LORD ALFRED (*seizing her hand*)

"Avis!"

AVIS (*drawing it away*)

"Leave me! Your mother kissed me. She has my promise; I am her guest; I will not betray her. Go!"

LORD ALFRED

"She is a good mother, but——"

AVIS

"No—a wise one, which is better."

LORD ALFRED

"You are right, Avis; I have been a coward to you."

AVIS

"Good-bye! You will soon be consoled; yours is a light nature. Good-bye, dear!" (*Leaves him without a backward glance. Lord Alfred sits down on a bench and weeps.*)



THE POPPIES

THEY rode into battle at break of the day,
With sashes and sabres and gonfalons gay,
The clashing of harness, the flashing of steel,
The beat of the drum and the trumpet's loud peal.
Not a heart nor an eye but was merry and bright,
And the poppies were white.

All crumpled and silken and snowy they grew
In a tangle of grasses, starred over with dew.
But the wheels of the cannon above them were rolled,
The hoofs of the horses struck deep in the mould,
And trampled and tattered at fall of the night
Were the poppies of white.

They lay in the meadow distilling their sleep,
Till the soldiers were wrapped in a slumber so deep
That the call of the bugle would never uncloset
To visions of glory their lids of repose.
The mist drew a veil o'er the brows of the dead,
And the poppies were red.

Both scabbards and sabres have crumbled to dust,
And roses have bloomed from the bayonet's rust,
But unbleached by the sun, and uncleaned by the rain,
The crimson of blood must forever remain
On the blossoms that over the battlefield spread,
For the poppies are red.

MINNA IRVING.

SOCIAL INCONSISTENCIES

By Eliot Gregory

THE dinner had been unusually long and the summer evening warm. During the wait before the dancing began I must have dropped asleep in the dark corner of the piazza where I had installed myself, to smoke my cigar, away from the other men and their tiresome chatter of golf and racing. Through the open window groups of women could be seen in the ballroom, and the murmur of their conversation floated out, mingling with the laughter of the men.

Suddenly, in that casual way peculiar to dreams, I found myself conversing with a solemn young Turk, standing in all the splendor of fez and stambouline beside my chair.

"Pardon, Effendi," he was murmuring, "is this an American ball? I was asked at nine o'clock; it is now past eleven. Is there not some mistake?"

"None," I answered. "When a hostess puts nine o'clock on her card of invitation she expects her guests at eleven or half-past, and would be much embarrassed to be taken literally."

As we were speaking our host rose. The men, reluctantly throwing away their cigars, began to enter the ballroom through the open windows. On their approach the groups of women broke up, the men joining the girls where they sat, or inviting them out to the lantern-lit piazza, where the couples retired to dim, palm-embowered corners.

"Are you sure I have not made a mistake?" asked my interlocutor, with a faint quiver of the eyelids. "It is my intention, while traveling, to remain faithful to my harem."

I hastened to reassure him and explain that he was in an exclusive and reserved society.

"Indeed," he murmured, incredulously. "When I was passing through New York last winter a lady was pointed out to me as the owner of marvelous jewels and vast wealth, but with absolutely no social position. My informant added that no well-born woman would receive her or her husband."

"It's foolish, of course, but that handsome woman with the crown on, sitting in the centre of that circle, looks very like the woman I mean. Am I right?"

"It's the same lady," I answered, wearily. "You are speaking of last year. No one could be induced to call on the couple then. Now we all go to their house and entertain them in return."

"They have doubtless done some noble action, or the reports about the husband have been proved false?"

"Nothing of the kind has taken place. She's a success, and no one asks any questions!"

"In spite of appearances, you are in a society where the standard of conduct is held higher than in any country of Europe, by a race of women more virtuous, in all probability, than has yet seen the world. There is not a man present," I added, "who would presume to take, or a woman who would permit, a liberty so slight even as the resting of a youth's arm across the back of her chair."

While I was speaking an invisible orchestra began to sigh out the first passionate bars of a waltz. A dozen

couples rose, the men clasping in their arms the slender matrons, whose smiling faces sank to their partners' shoulders. A blond mustache brushed the forehead of a girl as she swept by us to the rhythm of the music, and other cheeks seemed about to touch as couples glided on in unison.

The sleepy, Oriental eyes of my new acquaintance opened wide with astonishment.

"This, you must understand," I continued, hastily, "is quite another matter. Those people are waltzing. It is considered perfectly proper, when the musicians over there play certain measures, for men to take apparent liberties. Our women are infinitely self-respecting, and a man who put his arm around a woman (in public) while a different measure was being played, or when there was no music, would be ostracized from polite society."

"I am beginning to understand," replied the Turk. "The husbands and brothers of these women guard them very carefully. Those men I see out there in the dark are doubtless with their wives and sisters, protecting them from the advances of other men. Am I right?"

"Of course you're not right," I snapped out, beginning to lose my temper at his obtuseness. "No husband would dream of talking to his wife in public, or of sitting with her in a corner. Everyone would be laughing at them. Nor could a sister be induced to remain away from the ballroom with her brother. Those girls are 'sitting out' with young men they like, indulging in a little innocent flirtation."

"What is that?" he asked. "Flirtation?"

"An American custom rather difficult to explain. However, it may be roughly defined as the art of leading a man a long way on the road to—nowhere!"

"Women flirt with friends or acquaintances, never with members of their family?"

"The husbands are those dejected individuals wandering aimlessly about

over there like lost souls. They are mostly rich men, who, having married beautiful girls for love, wear themselves out maintaining elaborate and costly establishments for them. In return for his labor a husband, however, enjoys but little of his wife's society, for a really fashionable woman can rarely be induced to go home until she has collapsed with fatigue. In consequence, she contributes little but 'nerves' and temper to the household. Her sweetest smiles, like her freshest toilettes, are kept for the public. The husband is the last person considered in an American household. If you doubt what I say, look behind you. There is a newly married man speaking with his wife, and trying to persuade her to leave before the cotillion begins. Notice his apologetic air! He knows he is interrupting a tender conversation and taking an unwarrantable liberty! Nothing short of extreme fatigue would drive him to such an extremity. The poor millionaire slave has hardly left his desk in Wall street all the week, and arrived this evening only in time to dress for dinner. He would give a fair slice of his income for a night's rest. See! He has failed, and is lighting another cigar, preparing, with a sigh, for a long wait. It will be three before my lady is ready to leave."

After a silence of some minutes, during which he appeared to be turning these remarks over in his mind, the young Oriental resumed: "The single men who absorb so much of your women's time and attention are doubtless the most distinguished of the nation—writers, poets and statesmen?"

I was obliged to confess this was not the case; that, on the contrary, the dancing bachelors were for the most part impecunious youths of absolutely no importance, asked by the hostess, to "fill in," and so lightly considered that a woman did not always recognize in the street her guest of the evening before.

At this moment my neighbor's expression changed from bewilderment to admiration, as a young and very

lovely matron threw herself, panting, into a low chair at his side. Her *décolleté* was so daring that the doubts of half an hour before were evidently rising afresh in his mind. Hastily resuming my task of mentor, I explained that a *décolleté* corsage was an absolute rule for evening gatherings. A woman who appeared in a high bodice, or with her neck veiled, would be considered lacking in politeness to her hostess as much as if she wore a bonnet.

"With us, women go into the world to shine and charm. It is only natural they should use all the weapons nature has given them."

"Very good!" exclaimed the astonished Ottoman. "But where will all this end? You began by allowing your women to appear in public with their faces unveiled, then you suppress the fichu and the collarette, and now you rob them of half their corsage! Where, oh Allah, will you stop?"

"Ah!" I answered, laughing, "the tendency of civilization is to simplify; many things may yet disappear!"

"I understand perfectly. You have no prejudices against women wearing in public toilettes that we consider fitted only for strict intimacy. In that case, your ladies may walk about the streets in these costumes."

"Not at all!" I cried. "It would provoke a terrible scandal if a woman were to be seen during the daytime in such attire, either at home or abroad. The police and the law courts would interfere. Evening dress is intended only for reunions in private houses, or at most, to be worn at entertainments, where the company is carefully selected and the men asked from lists prepared by the ladies themselves. No lady would wear a ball costume or her jewels in a building where the general public was admitted. In London great ladies dine at restaurants in full evening dress, but we Americans consider that vulgar."

"Yet, last winter," he said, "when passing through New York, I went to a great theatre where there was an orchestra and many singing

people. Were not those respectable women I saw in the boxes? Yet there were no *moucharabies* to screen them from the eyes of the public. Were all the men in that building asked by special invitation? That could hardly be possible, for I paid an entrance fee at the door. From where I sat I could see that, as each lady entered her box, the opera glasses were fixed on her, and her 'points,' as you say, discussed by the crowd of men in the corridors, who, apparently, belonged to quite the middle class."

"My poor, innocent Padischa, you do not understand at all. That was the Opera, which makes all the difference. The husbands of those women pay enormous prices, expressly that their wives may exhibit themselves in public, decked in jewels and suggestive toilettes. You could buy a whole harem of fair Circassians for what one of those little square boxes costs. A lady whose entrance caused no sensation would feel bitterly disappointed. As a rule, she knows little about music, and cares still less, unless some singer is performing who is paid a fabulous price, which gives his notes a peculiar charm. With us most things are valued by the money they have cost. Ladies attend the Opera simply and solely to see their friends and be admired.

"But it grieves me to see that you are forming a poor opinion of our woman-kind. They are more charming and modest than any foreign women. A girl or matron who exhibits more of her shoulders than you, with your Eastern ideas, may think quite proper, would sooner expire than show an inch above her ankle. We have our way of being modest as well as you, and that is one of our strongest prejudices."

"Now I know you are joking," he replied, with a slight show of temper, "or trying to mystify me, for only this morning I was on the beach, watching the bathing, and I saw a number of ladies in quite short skirts—up to their knees, in fact—with the thinnest covering on their shapely extremities. Were those women above suspicion?"

"Absolutely," I assured him, feeling inclined to tear my hair at such stupidity. "Can't you see the difference? That was in daylight. Our customs allow a woman to show her feet, and even a little more, in the morning. It would be considered the acme of indecency to let those beauties be seen at a ball. The law allows a woman to uncover her neck and shoulders at a ball, but she would be arrested if she appeared *décolleté* on the beach of a morning."

A long silence followed, broken only by the music and laughter from the ballroom. I could see my dazed Mohammedan remove his fez and pass an agitated hand through his dark hair; then he turned and,

saluting me gravely, murmured:

"It is very kind of you to have taken so much trouble with me. I do not doubt that what you have said is full of the wisdom and consistency of a new civilization which I fail to appreciate." Then, with a sigh, he added: "It will be better for me to return to my own country, where there are fewer exceptions to rules."

With a profound salaam the gentle youth disappeared into the surrounding darkness, leaving me rubbing my eyes and asking myself if, after all, the dreamland Oriental was not about right. Custom makes many inconsistencies appear so logical that they no longer cause us either surprise or emotion. But can we explain them?



FOR A LUTE

IF I were King Cophetua
And you a beggar maid,
Oh, what a wealth of love, parlay,
Would at your feet be laid!

But since you are of love the queen,
And I a troubadour,
You go upon your way serene,
And I am very poor!

A. G.



DIDN'T KNOW THE STYLE

"WHAT was the trouble over at Wheezer's house last night?" inquired a prominent citizen of an Arkansaw village, addressing another citizen, also prominent. "I understand that he whirled in and beat his wife right sharply with a bed slat!"

"Yes. You see, Mrs. Wheezer took and made for her husband a night-shirt, like them city fellers up Nawth are said to wear to bed, after a pattern she found in a magazine, and Wheezer, mistakin' the gol-danged thing for a shroud, and estimatin' that his wife was figgerin' on his dyin' so's she could marry some other feller, got sawter aggravated and ashy over the matter, and mauled her as aforesaid, without stoppin' to ask for an explanation."

TOM P. MORGAN.

THE SON OF A NEW WOMAN

By Miriam Michelson

FOR a long time he was in doubt as to his name. It had changed more than once with the changes in his mother's condition, so that till he became a man he was never quite sure of a family name.

The first name that he learned to write was Percival Heminway. He remembered weeping silently because his name was so long, and envying his small, pink-frocked neighbor—whose profile he had sketched upon his slate—because she could write Dolly O'Niel long before he had mastered the appalling capital "H" that threatened to leave him only Percival.

Then one day he found out that he was no longer Percival Heminway but Percy Doten. He also discovered that his mates at school watched him curiously to see whether he himself had not changed in some peculiar way to fit the new name. He noticed, too, that his teacher's tongue stumbled over the unfamiliar name, and that each time it did so he became aware of a hundred eyes turned upon him; which made him blush furiously and miserably, although he did not know why he should be ashamed.

A week later his mother told him that his father, who had gone away, would not come back, and that they, too, were to leave town.

"To go to him?" asked Percy, with no eagerness.

"No," she answered, shortly. And then added: "Do you care?"

"I don't know," he answered. "No, I don't care."

She took him up in her arms and kissed him then.

Which was strange, Percy thought, because she did not kiss him often.

So Percy left that school, regretting only a certain kind of molasses creams Dolly O'Niel used to share with him.

He learned to look back upon this period more and more regretfully, for he never tasted those particular candies again, and sweets in general became alarmingly scarce. Besides, there was a sort of undefined discomfort about this new life of theirs which made Percy vaguely fretful, and disposed to seek the enjoyment his pleasure-loving nature craved, in bullying the smaller children who played in the court of the shabby lodging-house.

He did not at all regret the home they had left. He hardly remembered it, and although he felt resentful and ill at ease in the small, bare rooms, he enjoyed to the utmost going downtown and breakfasting at one place and dining at another. They lunched at home, his mother making tea over a vile-smelling coal-oil stove. Rather bad tea it was, Percy's mother being uniformly unsuccessful as a house-mother.

So it came about that Percy was a dyspeptic before most children are conscious of the possession of a stomach. He was precocious in other ways, too. He found some cigarettes on his mother's dressing-table, and smoked one after the other till what was left of child nature in him revolted and he was miserably ill. He had a choice collection of oaths which he had picked up at the cheap restaurants from the waiters and cooks, whose company he sought when his mother received a friend and sent him out to play, while she talked with the gentleman. And he had a store of pert cynicism, a miniature caricature

of the clever things he heard from his mother's lips, when people, chiefly men, called.

He was too quick-witted not to realize his mother's cleverness, her wit and her superiority to all men or women they met. He had realized all this, though, so long ago that it no longer awakened his admiration. He had been present once—just a short time before he became Percy Doten—at the end of a battle royal between his father and his mother.

"What do you mean by it, Maida?" Frederick Heminway had demanded, pausing in his nervous tramping up and down, to confront his wife. "Do you fancy, for a moment, that I shall permit this sort of thing to go on?"

Maida looked at him a moment, her level brows frowning above cold gray eyes that gleamed with rage and contempt. Then, of a sudden, she laughed, gayly, insolently, though the laugh was forced and her voice shook with excitement.

"'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said,
'Sir,' she said, 'sir,' she said.
'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said!"

She sang it saucily. Her voice was not sweet, but there was a *diablerie* about all she did that made it very effective.

Percy thought it immensely clever.

He never forgot his father's start of amazed indignation, his unintelligible utterance choked with passion, and the violence with which he banged the door after him.

This was the last time he saw his father. But he was too much his mother's son not to sympathize with her, and, young as he was, he felt only a sort of contempt for the man whom she always worsted in a battle of tongues.

After a time Percy had so assimilated himself to his surroundings that the memory of that first quiet, domestic home into which he had been born had almost faded from his mind. There was in him a certain chameleonlike readiness to take on the tone of his environment, which made life very easy for the lad.

His mother, too, had this sort of artistic instinct, but she was possessed in turn by so eager a desire for activity, so keen a thirst for pleasure, and such a strong consciousness of others' inferiority and her own nimble wit, that she was driven by sheer force of her ambition, her pride and her vanity to seek a stage, however small, the centre of which she might be; where she might enjoy the dominance and the admiration she felt to be her due, and where her brilliant mind, her cynical, quick tongue and her superficial, disdainful temperament might no longer feed upon themselves.

All this, of course, could be known to Percy only by the material effect it had later upon their way of living. The waves of action that beat outward, the winds and tides of this clever woman's dissatisfied mind and turbulent will, rippled back upon her son softly, gently, at first almost imperceptibly.

As a consequence of his mother's meeting an old friend upon the street, Percy found himself once more brought into contact with Dolly O'Niel. Dolly, too, had been transplanted from the school opposite where the peerless molasses creams were to be had. In this larger city she met Percy again with an open-eyed timidity, a respectful awe, which said much for the accomplishments he had acquired in his freer life in the metropolis.

But the exhibition of these accomplishments, though it deeply impressed Dolly, was not repeated. Above all, Percy learned that he was not to display the wit and wisdom he had picked up in the city's streets in the presence of Dolly's mother.

How he became conscious of this intimation, or why he obeyed it, Percy did not exactly know. His mother rarely commanded. Since they had been alone so much together she treated her son as a sort of equal. But the quick-witted lad had observed in her manner, while she listened, half-disdainfully, half-deferentially, to the often expressed religious

views of Mrs. O'Niel, that which said more to him than a dozen homilies.

The first effect of their renewed acquaintance with the O'Niels was an unpleasant one for Percy. He was sent to Sunday-school, where, to be sure, he met Dolly, robed in all the glory of a rich man's daughterhood and in the childish primness induced by the consciousness of her fine clothes and a faint understanding of the significance of the religion her mother professed so passionately.

But it bored Percy. He had been born a scoffer. His mother's light, quick, unemotional temperament was his. He belonged to the army of the unimpressed. He, like his mother, realized his possession of faculties above the ordinary, and the very positiveness of the religious teaching set the yeast of pert cynicism and flip-pant rebellion seething within him.

He appealed to his mother. Standing before her, her every feature reproduced (though not made masculine) in his face as was her every characteristic in his nature, he mimicked for her the mannerisms of his teacher, of the minister, of Dolly herself as she rose in all her finery to lisp the answer to a question, and of Dolly's mother, whose faith was too earnest to content itself with ordinary church service, and so sought every opportunity of expression.

His mother smiled at the excellence of the imitation. And she looked more than once at a rude caricature of Mrs. O'Niel leading in prayer, which he had drawn on the margin of his catechism.

"I won't go any more, Ma Maida," he concluded, using the name he had learned when a baby. "Say, tell a fellow, what d'ye want me to go for, anyway?"

But she rose pettishly.

"Don't tease, Percy," she said, impatiently.

"All the same, I'll find out what you're up to," he responded, below his breath, scowling so heavily that his light eyebrows were almost visible.

But he continued to attend Sunday-school.

It could not have been six months later that Percy and his mother removed from their shabby lodging to the beautiful home of the O'Niels. Here Maida Doten became the confidential secretary of the mistress of the house, whose religious duties and philanthropic ideas required more time than she could spare from the care of her home.

The position was not a sinecure. Mrs. O'Niel was at the head of one of the largest hospitals in the city. It was her secretary's business to visit this place for her, to organize entertainments to increase its funds and to sing on these occasions those lively French ditties which she gave with such spirit and such a pretty accent. She must assist in the editing of a religious leaflet in which Mrs. O'Niel's heart was bound up. All the letters she must answer. All the cases of want she must investigate. All the bills she must audit. All the tangled threads which women twist while working together her tact must smooth out.

In return for all this, beside a most lavish compensation, Maida lived in the full enjoyment of the luxury her self-indulgent nature craved. She took her place, not as a servant, but as a most distinguished guest, and held it because of her skilful management, her keen, mocking wit and the unsuspecting, unassertive character of the older woman, at whose hospitable table she sat, the centre of attraction, self-possessed, smiling, brilliant, glowing like a jewel well set.

Percy slipped into the ways of the generous, well-conducted establishment with as much ease as he had fallen to the street boys' level. He became fastidious about his clothes, extremely particular as to his food. He devoted himself to acquiring a critical knowledge of wines, although he had only lately passed from the short-trousers era—unduly prolonged in his case. He continued the use of the hair wash which his mother had once used impartially on her own head and his, and he wore his dull yellow locks very long and parted in

the middle. He bullied the servants. He criticised the frocks Dolly wore. He used his mother's perfumes lavishly, mimicked for the entertainment of the kitchen the doings in the drawing-room, sought the wine of applause—a very little of which intoxicated him—from the thin lips of Riley, the coachman, or the thicker ones of Jackson, the colored waiter, and incurred the lasting displeasure of the head of the house by caricaturing him, life-size, all over the walls of the stable.

As a result of this last achievement Percy was sent away to school. He returned to his mother at the end of six weeks.

"If you think, Ma Maida, that a fellow of my age is going to be treated like a kid, you're mistaken," he said, straddling a chair in front of her desk. "They're a lot of old grannies. 'Smoking strictly prohibited!' How'd you like that yourself?" he asked, with a wink. "Have one?" He offered her the cigarette he had rolled with his thin, discolored fingers.

She shook her head.

"Given it up?" he asked, briskly, lighting the cigarette and exhaling the smoke through his nostrils with a long breath of satisfaction. "Women are funny creatures. When a man gets accustomed to a thing of this sort he simply can't drop it. I tell you, my nerves'd play the deuce with me——"

"Nonsense!" she interrupted him, good-humoredly. "The truth is, Percy, you're a graceless little beast. Or—or a genius——"

"Make it genius; that's a dear girl!" murmured Percy from the divan.

"What is going to become of you, anyway, O thoroughly self-satisfied son of me?" she exclaimed, smiling through her lashes, her narrow eyes half-shut. "How are you going to make a living? What are your plans for the future?"

He spread out his small hands deprecatingly and shrugged his narrow shoulders.

It was her own gesture absurdly

reproduced in this pallid, affected manikin. She recognized it, and laughed aloud in artistic enjoyment of the situation. She had the plan for a book in her head, and Percy was to be its hero. She studied him now with the impersonal admiration of an author.

As soon as he had his mouth free from smoke, Percy answered.

"Don't bother about me, Ma Maida. We Dotens are clever people, and it doesn't take much to beat as stupid a world as this out of a living," he said, with vague confidence. "I say, you haven't said anything about my uniform. The only decent thing about that school's the uniform. Smart, hey? Isn't your Percy a dream in it? What d'ye think?"

But Percy, to his indignant surprise, found his mother for once uninterested in the subject of clothes. He had time only to display his beauty in his new uniform to the admiring eyes of Dolly before another school was found for him, in a town not far off, where at least "a man might smoke."

Just before vacation time, to Percy's surprise, his mother appeared in the little college town. She was going to write her book, she told her son, and had decided to write it here in Meridan, where it was quiet, where she knew no one and would have all her time at her own disposal.

"And the hospital?" asked Percy. "And her pious ladyship?"

The O'Niels, his mother explained, had closed their house. Mrs. O'Niel had given up all her work for the present. She and Dolly had gone abroad.

"And the old man—the cigarette phobe?"

"Don't catechize, Percy," she answered, a fine line appearing between her smooth brows betraying unusual irritation.

"It's a sign of weakness, old age or guilt, to show temper," said Percy, blandly, quoting his mother, only half-conscious that her epigrams were not his own. "Has Saint Mary O'Niel, like the good Christian she

is, overworked you, Ma Maida? Are you at last beginning to show that you are more than five years older than I? Or do you intend fascinating Old Moneybags and teaching him how to smoke?"

"You inherit your father's fine tact, my lad. Truly, I made a mistake in treating you as if you were my son only. I had forgotten the Heminway in you. I see how great is the paternal share in you, and how it increases as you grow older, now that I look at you."

She raised her lorgnette and measured him with a glance so cold, so scornfully impersonal, that, for the first time in his life, Percy blushed.

So potent was the effect of her sarcasm, that the day he heard of the O'Niel divorce Percy did not even mention it to his mother. Nor did she speak of it to him when he came over to the little hotel in the evening. She sent him and his companions—whose boyish admiration it amused her to awaken in this her exile—away early, saying that she was at work on her book this evening and did not care to be interrupted.

If there ever had been any hope of Percy's being anything but the son of his mother, it was speedily buried beneath the copies of this book, which was issued anonymously early in the autumn. In it the clever woman, who had so recently sparkled as one of the shining lights of Vanity Fair, satirized the society of the metropolis, while, by combining her memories of her own gifted childhood with Percy's precocious talents, she created an idealized Percy, a fascinating youth of genius, who mirrored the social world in his mocking, delicate raillery, in his early cynicism, in his witty, fearless, smiling exposition of things as his young, disillusioned eyes saw them.

The book was instantly successful. It was so fresh, so skilful, so good-humored. Its verbal caricatures of people well known all over the State were recognized immediately, and her readers laughed with the anonymous author over their foibles.

But it was the idealized Percy that caught the fickle literary fancy. People quoted the epigrammatic speeches ascribed to him, and wondered what his comments would have been on later events. The youth of the city affected his mannerisms, and his name became the latest synonym for very youthful Beau Brummels, the type of clever dandyism produced when a plant of rare qualities is submitted to the forcing process in the social hot-house.

The original of the character was discovered by an inquiring newspaper reporter, and Percy figured in a spectacular way on an entire page of the "*X-Ray*." He was sketched, photographed, interviewed. His natural vanity and precocity were exaggerated as he became more and more self-conscious. He tried desperately to live up to his reputation, and he came in time to believe the character a photographic copy, instead of the idealized figure his mother's artistic fancy had painted in on the crude canvas of his real self.

Then came his mother's marriage to Harvey O'Niel, and Percy adopted his stepfather's name, as well as all things belonging to him.

While Maida O'Niel reveled at last in the possession of wealth, while she bestowed upon her costumes and her beautiful house the artistic skill and the dainty originality which had made her book so great a success; while she gathered about her a *salon* such as this modern city had never beheld; while she assumed and was conceded the position of *arbiter elegantorum*, and while to her charmed husband's eyes his brilliant young wife was infallible, Percy set himself seriously to filling the important and congenial rôle of a rich man's son.

Although his constitution was delicate, Percy learned to drink, and conceived it his duty to his position to outdo all amateur drunkards in the élite of the younger set. He set up apartments of his own, and in the course of a year or two his table, to which he gave the most fastidious attention, became a thing of which a

gourmet of three times his age might have been proud. He fought a duel with champagne bottles over the reigning belle of Bohemia, and began to look critically upon his mother's maids as so many more or less satisfactory applicants for his favor. He turned his attention to racing, and possessed already the nucleus of a very fair stable, when suddenly the stream of gold ran dry.

Harvey O'Niel failed. The great establishment in town was sold. That in the country was let. All Percy's dearly bought knowledge of wine, women, horses and dining became absolutely worthless. He could not sell his experience. He lacked funds to enlarge it.

At first he was inclined to sulk.

"What a fool the old duffer was to get caught," he confided to his mother.

She laughed from pure amusement at his disgusted, pale little face, his down-drooping thin lips, his hair still dyed and worn long, though parted on the side, now that most men wore it parted in the middle.

"I don't see the fun," Percy sneered, lifting his light eyebrows.

"You're the fun, old man," she answered. "No one expects you to see yourself. It would be fatal."

"Do you mean to say," demanded Percy, ignoring her words, "that you don't care?"

"I don't 'mean to say' anything, my young hero. I really don't know whether I care or not. Do you happen to have a cigarette? I'll take one, please. Just leave your box, will you? Run along, now."

She was lying on the couch, smoking, when her husband came in. He frowned when he saw the cigarette, but his troubled face lit up with pleasure as he looked into her smiling eyes.

"It's adorable of you, Maida," he said, taking her hand, "not to worry over this."

"D'ye know," she said, slowly, withdrawing her hand to remove the cigarette from her lips, "I think I was beginning to get awfully tired of

it all? I'm going to take to writing again, Harvey. I fancy I'd make a newspaper success."

"Maida!" he cried, in agitation, covering his face with his hands. "It isn't that bad. Surely I can support you still."

"Oh, yes, I know," she yawned, "but it would bore me to death to be put back into the domestic economy middle-class. That isn't my grade. I'm fit for higher or lower things—but painstaking, daily, hourly counting the cost, saving, saving and self-denying—heaven forfend! No, never again. I want to get away. For a change I want to try—"

"Away?" he repeated, blankly.

"Yes," she laughed, "to Bohemia. Come along?"

He shook his head. But he followed her, nevertheless. When, within a year, she had become queen here as she had been of Philistia, this man, who till two years ago had most sturdily upheld all conventions, bent his pride and humbled his practical, simple mind that he might enter with her into that fertile, critical, self-conscious land of the free in art.

But though Harvey O'Niel loved this woman with an intensity of passion he himself would have ridiculed a few years ago; though his admiration of her clear, brilliant, ironical genius was boundless, despite its unlikeness to his own solid, thorough, rather heavy mind, he never became a naturalized citizen of the magic country. His trust in his wife was complete. His faith in her ability was unlimited. But he had lived too long amenable to the laws made for and by the great majority. He made pitiful attempts to adapt himself to the lighter atmosphere where Maida O'Niel was in her element, but he floundered and struggled, as uncouth and uncomfortable as a deep-sea fish out of water. He was too much a man, too little an artist to resign himself to the rôle his wife gradually assigned to him. He felt himself ridiculous, superfluous; and in time, as Maida O'Niel grew surer of herself and less and less inclined to observe forms and social regulations,

made, as she declared, only for the ordinary woman, he became so.

But Percy O'Niel took to the land where the limelight always shines as to his birthright. In an incredibly short time he had adopted the empty emblems of artistic life, and had learned to sneer at those who lived the life he, boy as he still was, had outgrown. He decided to become an artist, had the garret of his mother's house fitted up as a studio, picked up from the real workers who frequented this free and easy *salon* the argot of the palette and mahl-stick, and adopted as his usual costume the velvet jacket and *négligé* shirt that the artist he modeled himself on wore only when at work. He added a dash of red to his hair dye and wore his long straight locks combed severely back from his low pale forehead. He posed as a cynic—he was really blasé at nineteen—quoted his mother as often as possible without quotation marks, and was hated with an absurd, disproportionate adult hatred by her admirers.

Yet he studied with the chief of these, Horace Everton, and, if every positive virtue in the lad had not long been deadened by his precocious, artificial life, he might still have succeeded, for he had Maida O'Niel's quickness, her susceptibility, her vanity. But application he held to be a decidedly bourgeois quality, and, as such, unworthy of Bohemia's prince—prince by right of maternal descent.

Maida O'Niel was at her apogee when a divorce was arranged between her and the man who still loved her—and whose name she retained because it represented her fame in journalistic circles. She had become the star of a great newspaper—an up-to-date, flamboyant journal—whose millionaire proprietor spent half a million, and made a whole million annually in seeking to anticipate the fickle public's taste and in catering to it.

The name Harvey O'Niel had given her was known to the newspaper readers of a dozen States. Maida O'Niel's delicate, disdainful face and

her graceful, well-gowned figure, in various costumes according to the vicissitudes of her work, were a feature of her articles—clever, witty, pretentious, affected articles, but always interesting, whether they treated of a hanging or a prize fight, a scandalous escapade or the life history of some unfortunate, guilty creature, caught up to be exhibited with mock sympathy in the cruel talons of the press.

Maida's fame, which was advertised in precisely the same sensational manner as that of a stage favorite, was at once a triumph to the artful editor of the great paper and for herself—not to count Percy.

Percy learned to glory in the name of O'Niel. He loved to mention it in a carefully casual way, in order to hear his listener ask:

"Any relation of Maida O'Niel?"

"Only her son," he would answer, outwardly bored, inwardly never wearied of the reflected curiosity, the second-hand interest, he excited.

Besides, there were privileges attached to his mother's position which Percy, as his mother's escort, shared. There were trips on special trains; there were greetings with great people and with unusual ones; there was the stir and the uncertainty of newspaper life, which promised so much novelty and, in Maida O'Niel's case, lacked all the unpleasant features; there was the fascination of knowing the inside of things political and social; there was the delightful consciousness of being exempt from general rules and of being treated with peculiar deference by those who realized the influence exerted by a great journal, and there was the pretense of power, with which Percy amused himself, promising confidently or refusing absolutely, as the fancy seized him, to suppress or to publish news stories—though such suppression or publication, if it conflicted with the paper's fluctuating policy, was utterly beyond his influence.

With Maida O'Niel's appointment as dramatic critic for the *X-Ray* came

Percy's nearest approach to greatness.

It suited the management of the newspaper just at this time to give absolute freedom to its critic's pen, partly because Maida O'Niel's ability had made her position so strong that she could decline to permit her opinions to be held in managerial bondage.

Behold Percy now with the city's actresses at his feet, from the leading lady, whose appetite for praise grows upon what it feeds, to the most obscure soubrette, yearning for a line mention.

While Maida O'Niel attended first nights, the seat beside her contested for by rival critics eager to take their tone from her, by clubmen whose attention had been attracted by the smart style of her gowns and of her pen, and by solicitous managers who realized that nothing was good unless Maida O'Niel considered it so, and nothing could be bad on which she was pleased to smile approval—all this time Percy reigned behind the scenes.

At the stage-door his entrance was never disputed, and in the great canvas corridors, the twilight of the theatrical gods and goddesses, he stalked about very much in the way, very much at home, very much disposed to be critical and very well self-satisfied.

He advised Pauline Berthier as to her gowns, and suggested a change in her most effective scene. He showed little Lollita Lowry the faults in her make-up and the proper way of bedizening her saucy soubrette's face. He explained to Ricard, the stage manager, the necessity and the importance of putting things on in a certain way—Percy's way. And he reduced Wores, the leading man, to impotent fury by informing him, in a kindly, patronizing tone, of the hopelessness of achieving results unless more modern methods—Percy's methods—were followed.

Percy had serious thoughts, at this time, of dropping art and becoming a stage manager himself. His temperament was too mocking, too un-

imaginative; he was too saturated with precocious cynicism; his tastes and emotions were not positive enough to permit the glamour of the stage to seize upon him. He was never stage-struck. But he fancied the manager-artist's part, and could the theatrical world have been persuaded to realize his greatness and his fitness for the position, and so to dispense with the bore of preliminary work and struggle, Percy felt that he might accept what, at this time, he considered his vocation.

But a letter which he found on his mother's desk distracted his attention at the critical moment when he had about decided to voice his preference.

What time Percy had to spare from his attendance at the theatres, his mornings given to sleep, his spasmodic work at Everton's studio, his engagements in Bohemia and in that lower world that hangs about the skirts of the Empress of Art, Percy spent at the office of the *X-Ray*. Here, those who feared or admired his mother's witty, sarcastic tongue, ridiculed and despised this small, unhealthy manikin who, copying the very tones of her voice, aping her every mannerism, repeated the clever sayings they had already heard from Maida O'Niel herself; and all the while he was so encompassed by the armor of his conceit that he mistook their contempt for bluff, free-spoken companionship.

See Percy now, seated in the charming little apartment an appreciative, if very "yellow," newspaper management had fitted up for the woman journalist whose name was part, and not a small part, of its own success.

The son of his mother had thrown himself into the great leather-covered chair, his slight, short figure comfortably tilted backward, his hat on the back of a well-poised head, a cigarette between his pale, smooth lips, his slim, well-shod feet crossed on the desk before him, in his hands the letter he had already read and was re-reading.

All sorts of letters came to Maida O'Niel, and the perusal of this office

correspondence was Percy's regular morning amusement. But this letter more than amused, it interested him.

"I don't know how to address you," the letter began, "because it seems so queer to call you Mrs. O'Niel—my mother's name. But I have a favor to ask which would be so easy for you to grant, and which, perhaps, you will because of the time when I used to call you 'Aunt Maida.'

"I want to make my own living. I want to be independent of my father. My mother is dead, you know. She died over a year ago in Munich. And now I have come back to America.

"I believe I can write. At any rate, I want to try to see whether I can or not. So I write to ask if you will help me to begin, in no matter how small a way, to become a reporter.

"May I call on you? I suppose you must be very busy, but if you will appoint any time when I can see you I shall be so happy and so grateful."

The letter was signed simply, "Dolly O'Niel."

It was a silly little letter, and even Percy, who believed himself too thoroughly emancipated to retain old social prejudices, was a bit shocked that this girl, perhaps through her ignorance of all the circumstances, should appeal to the woman on whose account her mother had divorced her father.

But the two words, "Dolly O'Niel," summed up all of freshness, all of sincerity, all of youth that was left to this worn-out boy, so prematurely old and experienced, yet so far from real manhood.

"Dolly O'Niel"—the schoolroom, so crowded and strange and big and awe-inspiring, that first day at school, and the molasses creams across the way.

"Dolly O'Niel"—the flutter of freshly laundered pink muslin and flying pink ribbons.

"Dolly O'Niel"—the impressive tones of the organ and the cool basement of the church where even the sun's glare seemed awed and quieted.

"Dolly O'Niel"—the upturned brown eyes, with their innocent admiration of himself, in all the glory of the new school's uniform, and the touch of her young, fresh lips, his first kiss on a woman's mouth.

Percy took paper and an envelope from the drawer beside him. He wrote a note strangely unstudied, simple, sincere. He pressed the electric button beneath the desk, and the office boy entered.

"Take this note, Tony," said Percy, his complacent, important self again—that self the office boy so detested. "Get a messenger and rush it. Take the boy's number and bring me—No, never mind; I've decided not to send it. I'll go myself. You can go."

Tony slammed the door behind him and solaced himself by a derisive dance of rage out in the corridor. He had just finished when Percy appeared, took the elevator and caught an up-town car.

Dolly O'Niel's letter to the star special writer of the *X-Ray* had been the outcome of a mood more than the stirring of talent. The girl's mind had been turned toward journalism in the very way another girl might become stage-struck. The sensational, personal articles of Maida O'Niel, written in the first person, the theatrical *éclat* with which her work was advertised, the posters about town with her name in shouting capitals and her portrait as carefully posed, as effective in its way, as that of any stage favorite—it had all appealed to the girl's vanity.

To Percy's jaded eyes she was a girlish vision of delight. It was so long since he had been close to a face not painted, to eyes not heavily blackened, to smiles that were not artificial as the rouge pot, and to voices as unnatural as grease paint itself. It was so long since a woman's lids had drooped beneath his gaze. It was so long since he had noted the blush of round, youthful cheeks beneath the fluttering long lashes. It was so long since he had heard the accents of sincerity and the words of simplicity that his cold, precocious heart—immature

and yet corrupt—beat quickly, and a reflection of the youth and virginity of that sweet round face lit up his own tired, cynical, drawn features.

His mother had sent him to answer her letter, Percy lied glibly. He was to assure her of Maida O'Niel's encouragement, and of her assistance when there should be an opening on the *X-Ray* staff.

"In the meantime," said Percy, quoting the words Brandt, the novelist, had used the night before when telling Maida O'Niel of a similar application for literary advice, "in the meantime, Dolly, write; write whatever is in your heart. Pay as little attention to the publishers and to the work of others as you can. But write now, my girl, while life is still interesting to you, while your point of view is wholesome and elevated, and while the world looks fresh and pleasing to your eyes; write now, before the capacity for original and optimistic work has left you."

It sounded very fine to Dolly. She hardly realized what he meant—or, rather, what the one meant who had originally given this advice; the possibility of an uninteresting world being quite beyond her imagination. But she looked up with awe at this old, old young man who could say such things so glibly, and Percy returned her gaze with red-lidded eyes in which admiration struggled with egotism.

"When you've got some copy," he went on, enjoying, as he always did, the use of a technicality in the hearing of the uninitiated, "I'll look it over, give you a point or two, and polish it up, as—as I often do with mother's stuff."

He had not meant to say just this, but his sentence lacked an imposing finish. The beauty which had come with Dolly's womanhood gave Percy an unaccustomed feeling of unworthiness and required a counterbalance that his self-esteem might not suffer. Dolly must be impressed.

She was. Simplicity itself, she had, even when a child, taken Percy at his own valuation. This had been suf-

ficiently inflated in the old days when he was only Percy Doten. But in the five years since she had seen him there had been a steady increase in self-issued quotations of Percy stock, till now the little maiden forgot even her shocked surprise at his adoption and retention of a name to which he had no claim, in her open-eyed wonder at his greatness.

"Write verses too, Dolly," he concluded, with patronizing good-nature, and still quoting, "if you must. They'll help in developing your use of words. And there's a time in every writer's life when he thinks himself a poet. But burn them—burn them, sweet."

And he left upon her tempting, fresh lips that which burned, too, but burned sweetly.

Dolly never quite realized when she left off thinking romances and began living one. Her unsophisticated, ingenuous nature would soon have lost its charm for Percy had it not been for the secrecy which was necessary that they might meet. So that the romance of intrigue spiced the little idyl for one whose vitiated taste could not long be content with simple heart-food.

Percy seldom permitted himself to think of Harvey O'Niel. His ex-stepfather's contempt had been openly and fully expressed once. And though Percy's self-confidence had not been, could not be, shaken, there had stuck in his memory some short scornful phrases, the broken arrowheads of speech, which, at times, poisoned and marred the perfection of his complacency.

But his empire over the daughter of Harvey O'Niel was beautifully complete. The years they had lived apart had estranged the girl from her father, although the generosity of Dolly's mother had concealed from her daughter all that might have embittered the child's life and prevented a reunion of father and daughter after the mother's death.

Dolly forgot all about her journalistic ambitions in the absorbing interest of her first real love story,

which she lived with the unconscious greedy selfishness of youth. And when the blissful volume was ripe for the conventional ending she yielded to her lover's wish for secrecy, joined him one morning on the water front, and hurrying out to sea on a tugboat, this girl of seventeen was married by the facetious captain to the son of Maida O'Niel.

In the first flush of his young husbandhood, tasting all the sweets of Dolly's adoring self-surrender, his young wife's residence with her father obviating all the responsibilities of his position, Percy felt, for the first time in his life, the necessity and the pleasure of work. He went to Everton's studio, aglow with resolve. But he had never acquired the habit of labor. He wasted his enthusiasm planning work which he could never execute. And in Everton, too, perversely enough just now, there was an indisposition to assist and to encourage that was new to Percy. Often the studio was closed. Often the artist was out of town, the janitor said. Often there was a feverish impatience, an unconquerable irresolution, an irritable temper about Everton which made the studio an unpleasant and unfrequented place.

Though Percy's nature was too versatile and too fickle to confine itself to one object, in the early days of his marriage he spent much time with Dolly. And this time, as he must not encounter Harvey O'Niel, happened to include just those hours when his mother was at liberty. So he had not seen Maida O'Niel for some days when he learned from her maid that she had gone out of town.

"For the paper?" asked Percy. "She didn't ask me to go with her. I wonder why?"

The maid could not say. Percy would not inquire at the office of the *X-Ray*. It would be too severe a blow to his vanity to be compelled to admit that he did not know all his mother's plans. But her absence was particularly inopportune. He needed money, and he needed revenge. He wanted to ask his mother to "roast"

a certain actress whose son the night before had thrown Percy O'Niel, son of the famous Maida O'Niel, out of his mother's dressing-room.

All that was left to Percy was to wait sulkily for her return and to initiate Dolly very early into the duties and difficulties of a wife when her lord and master is pleased to be displeased.

But the days passed and still Maida O'Niel did not return. At the end of a week Percy received a letter from Everton, written on board a steamer.

MY DEAR PERCY: I might call you my dear son—only I am not the kind of man to see the beauty of stepsonship.

Your mother and I are married, and we are on our way abroad, where we shall live some years. I have prevailed upon Maida to permit me to tell you the news, and to tell you also the effect our marriage will have on your life.

For the present, at least, my wife is to be simply my wife. I am too selfish to consider her in any other light. She shall not write. She shall not bear the burden of motherhood—of another man's son, and that son a man in years. I am not fool enough to say in advance that my influence upon Maida will always be what it is now; but all the strength of my life and my art will pull in this direction.

It remains for you, therefore, to face your position and to make the best of it. However your wrath may be stirred just at present in reading this, if there is anything in you necessity will bring it out, and nothing but necessity that is near starvation will. I was five years younger than you are when I faced the world without a cent in my pocket. Maida will not hear of your being placed similarly. So I have promised her (and I enclose herewith the first quarter's allowance) to provide for you in a very small way for a year—not a day longer.

If anyone had written me a letter like this I should have refused the gift accompanying it. I have no fear that you will do so. But, although I am under no illusion as to your character, it is only just that I express myself as frankly as to your abilities. You've got it in you, Percy, in spite of all the decadent nonsense you've imbibed in the course of your lazy life. If you'll stop sneering and go to work, if what you get for your work is all you have to live on, if you'll heed the precious artistic impulse that

moves you and not drown it in dissipation, if you'll listen to the voice of one whose experience and whose dislike for you make his judgment rarely sound and impartial, if you'll quit posing and be yourself, Percy O'Niel—confound you! don't you take *my* name—you'll get your revenge for this letter of mine, surely, speedily and in full measure. For you can outstrip me and outdo me if you will.

HORACE EVERTON.

At the bottom of this there was a note.

I haven't seen Everton's letter, dear, but I've no doubt it's as brutally strong as he is. He has made me believe, though—what couldn't he make me believe?—that he knows you better than I do. It'll all come right, Percy, boy, and you know you can rely upon me. Forgive your runaway

MA MAIDA.

Isn't it a funny situation?

But Percy failed to see the humor in it. When he had recovered from the bewildered, lost-babes-in-the-woods feeling, his thoughts and his feet turned for comfort toward Dolly.

His little wife had her arms protectingly about him, and the sympathetic tears were still wet upon her cheek, when Harvey O'Niel opened the door suddenly and came in upon them.

Harvey O'Niel's remorseful love for his daughter—at once a post-mortem atonement to the wife of his youth, the companion of those long, placid, gently happy years of his first marriage, and the sole heart interest in a life nearly spent—would have forgiven the disillusion, the deception, had any other than Percy been the lover in the affecting but petrified tableau.

But this boy embodied for Harvey O'Niel all the faultiness, the levity, the frivolity, the selfish vanity of Maida. Though he recognized now that Percy's every vicious quality had its origin and counterpart in the woman he had loved, in Maida all had been redeemed by the brilliancy of her talents, by her independence, her strong sense of humor, her tact and her grace. This boy's inheritance was the rotten husk of her individuality. He was Maida's self, Harvey

O'Niel said to himself bitterly, without her smallest virtue and with all her faults intensified by his self-indulgent, depraved youth—a small, base copy of an original mind, bearing a resemblance, it is true, but a vile one, unclean, bodily, and lacking the soul.

Dolly blurted out the truth. Percy was her husband. They had been married a month. She loved him. He loved her. Surely her father would forgive.

"Leave the room, Dolly," said her father, huskily. "I'll settle with—"

"No," said Dolly, steadily, looking terrified but firm, and glancing from Percy's pale face to her father's purple one.

"Leave the room!" bellowed Harvey O'Niel. Like all weak men, he shouted when he was angry.

Dolly retreated before him till she stood almost at Percy's side.

"Dol—Dolly's my wife, sir," stammered Percy. "My conduct to your daughter has been thoroughly honorable, I flatter myself, and though, her reputation being in my power, one would think you'd conciliate rather than offend me, still I repeat she is my wife, and—"

"Then take her out of my house!" roared Harvey O'Niel.

It was only a pretense. If Percy had taken him at his word, Harvey O'Niel must have followed this daughter of his, the only creature on earth he had to love.

But Percy hesitated. In a remembering flash of indignation he thought of Everton's letter, of his mother's desertion, of the income which would not suffice even for his own variously developed appetites.

Dolly turned toward him, her hands outstretched, her pretty, round face aglow with shame and love and almost motherly comfort.

Still Percy stood, his facile tongue dumb, his small, nervous, twitching hands at his side.

Dolly paused. She looked at him long as if uncomprehending.

There was a silence. Harvey O'Niel watched, a slow, scornful, satisfied

smile coming over his bearded face. Then a low, long cry came from Dolly's lips. Her arms fell. Her face crimson with humiliated pride, she flew to the door, and the old man and the young one were left together.

Half an hour later Harvey O'Niel knocked at his daughter's door. Dolly knelt, still sobbing, before the bed, her dark head buried in the pillows. Her father raised her in his arms and held her close to him, till gradually her sobs were hushed.

Then he spoke.

"He's gone, my pet," he said, tenderly. "Soon you'll know he wasn't worth crying for. He sold you back

to me cheap, Dolly. If he knew how precious you are to me, child, he would not have been satisfied with so little. We'll be better friends now, you and I, won't we? And he will leave town, my darling, and never come back. At the end of the year you shall be freed of him very quietly, and no one will know. He'll never tell—trust him for that—as long as I pay him the allowance we've agreed on annually. Percy O'Niel values money he hasn't earned too highly to give up a good thing—Percy O'Niel!—O'Niel!" he repeated, bringing his fist down with a violent thump upon the corner of the bedstead.



IT WAS ALL RIGHT

"I LOVE you!"

The young and handsome millionaire, who had but a few moments before sent up his card to the distinguished actress, now stood before her, and as he gazed rapturously upon the brilliantly enameled face and richly upholstered form of the fair creature, it was only by a severe effort that he could restrain himself from rushing forward and embracing her.

"From the night when I saw you first," he continued, "when you came, or rather floated, upon the stage in that grand play of Kaskowiskey's, I felt that here, indeed, was a being whom I might fall down and worship. For weeks I struggled with this master passion; but as night after night I beheld you, I became only the more enveloped in this sweet mesh of eternal love. I am wealthy and unencumbered, and it will be possible for me to lavish upon you, not only the devotion, but the material blessings of an unrestrained love. My only fear is that you may be bound to another. It is this desperate thought that has kept me away so long. But now I feel that I must know the truth. Tell me, my loved one, if it is possible for you to be mine?"

The woman whom he so passionately addressed sighed a great sigh of relief, as, with a superhuman effort, she removed from her neck a few pounds of diamonds, that she might be more free to clasp him in her arms.

"How fortunate!" she said, smilingly, drawing him to her with that precision and skill which come only with long practice: "if you had come even yesterday, you would have found me married!"

TOM MASSON.

ASHES OF ROSES

'MID roses and rustle and laughter,
 Tea, greetings and gossip as well,
 The two of them met, a year after—
What neither would care to tell.
 Yet who could have said it mattered,
 Although with the eyes to see?—
 For they gossiped and laughed and chattered
 Of the marriages soon to be,
 Of the fact of his lessening chances,
 And the strangers come to town,
 The dinners and plays and dances,
 And the death of poor Nell Brown.

And he—oh, he spoke of his journey,
 And how Gibson had made a hit
 With his "Married," and Susie Gurney
 Was the model who sat for it.
 And they talked of Le Gallienne's novel,
 And she argued that Browning was wrong,
 With his rot about love and a hovel,
 And hunger and babies and song!
 And they chatted and sipped and debated,
 Till a man who was gaunt and gray
 Came and said that the carriage waited,
 And hurried his wife away

And so in the crowd they parted,
 And the world went on the same;
 And neither was broken-hearted,
 Yet unto them both there came
 A thought that they dare not cherish,
 A riddle they left unread:
How so much of them both could perish,
Yet neither, indeed, be dead!

ARTHUR J STRINGER.



THE HARMONY

YOU ask what is it—motion, manner, voice,
 Most makes my heart rejoice
 When I give thought to her who is my choice—

Glance of the eye, or wafture of a smile,
 White winsomeness or wile,
 That doth my raptured fancy most beguile?

Not one alone of these things can it be,
 Since they all form to me
 The parts of a compacted harmony!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

A SUMMER JOURNEY IN RUSSIA

By Mrs. Burton Harrison

IT would appear to be an accepted fact that one must travel by night in Russian railways. When we casually remarked to some friends in Petersburg that we were thinking of going on to Moscow by day train, the plan met with evident disapprobation. Rather than transgress an unwritten law of conventionality, therefore, we set out on the nocturnal journey, leaving the *gare* Nicholas to those who had gathered to waft us on our way, and speeding out into a dark landscape under a moonless sky, seeing nothing but the striped holland background of our compartment and the excited look on each other's faces which told that a long-dreamed-of experience had begun. Many hundreds of miles of travel lay before us ere we should even begin to turn in the direction of far America. But, as usual in the situations of our lives, it was hard to feel exactly the appropriate thing. One of us confessed to only a sensation of haughty compassion toward mere tourists going no farther into Russia than Moscow and Nijni-Novgorod. Another owned to thinking how it was in the Nicholas Station that *Anna Karénina's* husband came to meet her when she first thought his ears too long. A third was full of a distinguished fellow-passenger in the carriage ahead of ours, no less a celebrity than Father John of Kronstadt, to whom we had been recommended by a Russian friend, with every probability that we should make his acquaintance on this journey. And so chatting, we reached the next station buffet, where we got out to have a late cup of tea, after which the conductor, in a round cap and

belted coat, with high leathern boots, came in with his arms full of bed linen and broke us up for the night.

One sleeps fairly well in a Russian train, for the motion is even, the speed leisurely, the beds good. As the engines consume wood, passengers are spared the stifling coal smoke and rain of cinders that lend misery to travel elsewhere; and, lastly, the roomy compartments, with doors into a passageway running the whole length of the carriage, are a great improvement upon the "sections" of a Pullman sleeper. The dressing-rooms at either end are kept clean, although not supplied with soap or towels. Their drawback is in the whimsicality of the water faucets supplying basins which have no stop vents. These instruments of torture must needs be pressed on top and held down by the hand in order to induce them to send up into one's face a slim jet of water that immediately trickles out below. Until we fell upon the resort of preserving the corks of our bottles of soda water consumed along the route, and fitting them into the apertures of the basins, we knew no redress for the misery. There is another variety of Russian washstand, found in good hotels, which has a tin tank above it, and refuses to yield to any importunity for water unless worked by pedals, like a melodeon. The time and temper lost by travelers in finding out its mystery can never have been reckoned up. This also has the stationary tin basin without a stop vent, where, in attempting ablutions, one feels like Mrs. Carlyle's favorite Irishman, who went for a ride in a sedan chair without a bottom.

We were dressed, had turned out at Klin for breakfast, and were sitting looking at the country we sped through, next morning, when a message came from Father John of Kronstadt, asking us to visit him in his compartment.

To explain to those not already aware of it why this courtesy was transmitted to us by the guard with the air of a royal command, and with an evident feeling on his part of increased respect for its recipients, I should say that the famous Archpriest of Saint André of Kronstadt is the favorite religious hero of the Russian people. They credit him with the healing power in laying on of hands, and his prayers are believed to open the way for the faithful into the courts of heaven. He was sent for to soothe the last moments of the late Emperor Alexander, and enjoys the respect and confidence of the Imperial family. From afar throughout the Empire, the sick and suffering undertake pilgrimages to ask for his touch and blessing. His church is constantly overflowing with devotees, who make of it a gate of Jerusalem in the display there of the lame, halt, blind and decrepit. Rich people at the point of death send for him, conveying in return an equivalent, through his hands, to charity.

He was standing as we went into the compartment, and received us with cordial handshakes and a request to be seated. We found in the miracle-working Father an erect, good-looking man of middle age, with regular features, deep-set, intelligent eyes, a pleasant smile, and brown beard and hair cut after the fashion of pictures of the Saviour. He wore sacerdotal robes of rather shabby black, and a gold crucifix attached to a chain around his neck. Through an interpreter I enjoyed with him a chat of fifteen minutes, principally concerning the strong impression produced upon a foreigner by the reverential observance of religious forms in the Orthodox Church of Russia; by the exceeding beauty of their choirs of men's voices, so far surpassing the

effect of any organ, and by the fact that, in Russia, religion seems to an outsider to mean more to its followers than it does in other European countries. To this there could be but one answer—a suave acceptance of the compliment and a further eulogy of his Church. A talk about America ended with his hope that, should I ever write for my countrymen about what I had seen in Russia, I might be able to do so in a friendly spirit, and without those “exaggerations of impressionists” that had done harm in the past; then, with the promise of his prayers to this effect, another handshake and kisses on both cheeks, bestowed by him upon the rather surprised young man of our party, the audience came to an end.

When we reached Moscow, Father John, with his secretary, was ahead of us on the platform, the crowd making way for him as if for royalty, porters crossing themselves and bestowing furtive kisses upon his hands and sleeves; two fine ladies going down upon their knees on either side of him, as he got into a fine private carriage and drove away, no doubt to the bedside of some wealthy grandee who had need of him at the entrance of the Dark Valley.

The voluminous literature descriptive of Moscow that has gone into print since the coronation of the present Emperor gives one pause upon the threshold of this subject. Our first drive through the ancient capital of the Czars proved to me, beyond dispute, that whereas until that moment I had thought myself in Russia, then I knew it. The Asiatic paving of the streets, the commingling of architectures, old and new; the movement about one of a crowd that on every side develops new, strange types, tribal peculiarities and dress; the historical associations of many centuries, pressed down and running over, within the enclosure of the Kremlin; the arches and shrines and churches and palaces that forever quicken imagination! It is like nothing but itself. Then, the colors of

the many-steepled city, with its domes and towers and cupolas of white and rose and green, make it seem, from above, like a bed of tender flowers of Spring!

What Moscow must have been during the pageants of the coronation we were afterward to better realize during the week of fêtes attending the Emperor's visit to Kief. As it was, we had the odd sensation of seeing the shell of the great ceremonial without its animating essence. In the museum of carriages at St. Petersburg they had shown us the long rows of sumptuous red leather harnesses, the plumes and the horse cloths, the Emperor's saddle and the golden chariots used by the two Empresses and the Court on the way through Moscow to the cathedral. Now, in the dim old cathedral itself, from which the pomp and flutter of the Imperial train had vanished, we saw the dais covered with crimson velvet upon which the young couple had been seated. And in the Palais des Armures, where all the world may gaze upon the accumulated treasures of the Czars for no more than a *pourboire* to the servant who shows them, were displayed, behind glass, the white and silver coronation robes of the young Empress, together with her fan, handkerchief, gloves and silken hose; and the uniform worn by the Emperor, the ermine mantles of both majesties, their crowns, thrones and canopies. The exhibition struck me as rather sad than otherwise; possibly because the rooms, elsewhere, are overcrowded with similar relics of so many all-powerful monarchs who have gone down to the dust of the forgotten. That sort of mortuary museum does not seem a fit place for the habiliments of a living pair of youthful monarchs, with a world of magnificent opportunities in their grasp.

There is no end to the sightseeing in Moscow. As soon as we arrived we engaged, from amid a ring of *isvostchiks*, who closed upon us like noisy, ravening wolves, a certain big, smil-

ing Vasily, boasting the possession of a *calèche*, with two seats and two horses. From early in the day, when the picturesque porters of the Slaviansky Bazaar, who stand at the hotel door in Russian dress, with an aureole of peacock feathers around their caps, put us into the carriage, till late in the evening, when we returned, after experimenting in national dishes at some famous restaurant, we kept Vasily's steeds in motion. The interiors alone of churches that one ought to see, the frescoes, images, tombs, saints, jewels, cups, holy relics, vestments and twinkling candles, are bewildering to the brain. To push along with the crowd, gentle and simple, that forever surges in and out of the tiny chapel of the Iberian Madonna, the miraculous image-in-chief of Moscow, whose shrine no Russian dares to pass without making the sign of the cross, is to be jostled, elbowed, trodden upon without mercy, and stifled by bad air impregnated with incense and stale tobacco, to allude to no worse odor. Therefore, as in all rounds of this character, human nature occasionally succumbs to craven weakness. I remember one church in the Kremlin where I loitered on the threshold, and actually turned away unable to make up my mind to endure the strain of a fresh series of religious curios. And at the Cathedral St. Basile, near the dread Calvary where Ivan the Terrible used to sit thundering out his orders for rapid decapitation of victims, one of us remained in the carriage, declaring nothing could induce her to look at another altar or iconostase that day.

Truth to tell, she got the best of St. Basile from outside. It is a puzzle in the matter of construction, looking as if a number of smaller churches had been piled one upon the other—their common roof a wilderness of domes of odd shapes, carved, fretted, imbricated, gleaming with golden crosses and tinted with brilliant colors. The story runs that after the church was finished, in the sixteenth century, Ivan the Terrible

put out the eyes of its architect, in order that he might never again create such a masterpiece. In 1812 Napoleon decreed its destruction by artillery, an order fortunately not carried out.

A sight perhaps the most interesting in Moscow is the ancient home of the Romanoff Boyars, which, admirably restored by the Emperor Alexander II, is to-day, like the Plantin House in Antwerp and the lovely Casa de Pilatos in Seville, a perfect reproduction of the original dwelling of old times. This was the birthplace of Michael Feodorovitch Romanoff, afterward Czar of the Russias and father of Peter the Great. Its steep stairways lead into quaint rooms with gilt leather or satin damask on the walls, mica instead of glass in the small, deep-set windows, fine wood carvings in the furniture and cupboards and masked doors; and the whole house, from nursery to kitchen, is crowded with those intimate personal souvenirs of an illustrious family, arranged as they were once in use, that bring one more in touch with history than the reading of many tomes. An odd feature is the Terem, or woman's quarter, in the top story of the house, set apart in those early days of Russia like the Tartar harem.

We went to the Tretiakoff gallery, where a vast array of Verestchagin's grim pictures of the Russo-Turkish War were familiar because of the number of that artist's canvases we had recently seen in the Winter Palace in Petersburg, and through the exhibition of his work in New York a few years ago. Other remarkable productions of modern Russian art were Aviasovsky's beautiful marines, Antakolsky's splendid marble statue of Ivan the Terrible, as an old man sitting in his chair, and Répine's "Convict's Sudden Return." The latter artist has also a painting of great force upon the unpleasant theme of the killing of his son by Ivan the Terrible; the tombs of those two, by the way, lie side by side in the Cathedral Arkangelsky,

that of the Imperial murderer covered by a black pall, to indicate that he died plain Brother Jonas, a repentant monk.

Leaving the others to make the full round of the gallery, a favorite resort of Moscow citizens, I sat on a bench in the garden and watched the crowd swarm in and out. It was a delicious day, cool in the shade of a wide-spreading linden, and upon the blue sky flecked with little argent clouds above the enclosure of the grounds I saw the imprint of a tall tower, pierced with fantastic apertures revealing its carillon of bells within. Around it gathered spires, roofs and domes, whose crosses and pinnacles of gold shone in the sun, a vision suggesting any country rather than the frozen North of our imagination. Behind me a hedge of raspberry bushes grew against a white-washed fence; tubs painted green were set around the house to catch the drippings of the eaves. There were flower beds, grass borders and walks so neatly kept that a pigeon's feather drifting across them seemed an intrusion—all these relics of the days when the house was the dwelling of a public-spirited merchant who bequeathed it to the city. In the street beyond the entrance gate they were digging a deep trench, out of which from time to time emerged wild-looking men in ragged red, brandishing their picks and shovels like demons in a pantomime. To and from the sidewalk passed and re-passed a decent crowd of citizens with their wives, sweethearts and families; no haste, no bustle—their pleasuring was accomplished in orderly fashion. Most numerous in the throng of visitors were priests, schoolboys, soldiers and officers, who, spite of the August warmth, wore sweeping overcoats of cloth. The schoolboys, in blue uniforms, with caps and silver badges, arrived in gangs under conduct of tutors, who experienced the difficulty common to authority the world over of keeping them from breaking ranks to punch and otherwise maltreat each other

during the delay before the door. Three children of the working class came out, the oldest, a little girl, aged about ten, affecting maternal airs in the direction of two juniors of seven and six. These were succeeded by a party of American tourists, one of whom, a lady, exclaimed as she passed me: "Don't speak of going *anywhere* but straight back to the hotel! This old gallery has just tired me to death!"

One more glimpse at Moscow. We drove out by way of the red and white Château Petrovsky where the Czars stop on the eve of coronation; we desired to look at the scene of the tragedy of coronation week. The Khodynsky field, used for military manoeuvres, horse races and large gatherings of the people, is a wide grassy plain, its farthest borders apparently lost in the blue mist of the horizon. By Vasily, our driver, who, in common with everyone of his class in Moscow that had spoken to us of the affair, claimed to have been present, we were conducted to the fatal excavation, a wide rift in the even expanse of the field, increased by taking away quantities of sand to strew on the streets for the passage of the Imperial procession to the Kremlin. Two or three natives found hovering on the edge of this death-trap, who also declared themselves to have been eye-witnesses of the disaster, began describing it in unison—a process less confusing to the two of us who understood not a word than to our Russian-speaking comrade. An old gentleman, who was poking feebly around in the trenches with a walking-stick, finally coming up to the surface and avowing himself a late arrival in Moscow, eager for information, a diversion from us was effected; and one citizen only, who succeeded in giving a coherent account of the event, remained to go with us on our rounds.

On the far side from where we stood had been ranged the booths for the distribution of the Imperial memorial gifts; behind us lay the camping-ground of the eager multitude of

peasants, who had journeyed afoot from far and near to be present at the fêtes. Whole villages had emptied their inhabitants into the crowd, to have them crushed out of life under a human avalanche in that blind, awful struggle in which each was striving to get one of those Imperial gifts. There were 1,429 souls trampled out in that appalling catastrophe, as shown by the subsequent report of the official Gazette of Petersburg.

It was a place of gruesome memories as we strayed among the sand pits, by the great well that had been choked with corpses to the brink. A recent heavy rain had washed the dirt on the surface of the crevasses in the bank from bits of china, cloth, buttons, remnants of boots and hats, with which we found one of the *lapti*, or shoes of bark strips plaited by the peasants for their own wear. The latter is hanging now in a study thousands of miles of salt sea away from the scene of the tragedy, and contains a "coronation cup" of metal decorated with the Russian double eagle, a peasant's head handkerchief and a "Tver" cake; the last two serving as the best substitutes procurable for the dole so many poor lives were sacrificed to secure. In the spot where I picked it up grew a couple of hardy young plants of the sunflower, sprung, no doubt, from the seeds habitually carried in the pocket of the Russian peasant, which are to him as the solace of the quid to a jolly tar.

Returning into town, we encountered a fine carriage drawn by four horses and attended by footmen with bared heads. It contained the Iberian Madonna, absent from her shrine on a mission of mercy, or perhaps to set the seal of her sanctity upon some family festival among people who could afford to pay the church well for her precious company. While she is away a substitute takes her place in her chapel niche. Her annual monetary collections, divided between her own special convent and the Metropolitan of Moscow, are between eighty and ninety thousand dollars. This famous Madonna is an icon, or

framed picture of the Virgin, covered with a golden plaque that leaves exposed her nut-brown hands and face, the latter scarred with the sword-thrust of an insurgent Tartar of old days. In the rays of her glory and in her mantle are set hundreds of precious stones. When we met her Vasily pulled up his horses, snatched off his cap, and fell to crossing himself with fervor. Had Vasily been the Czar he would have done the same.

Nijni-Novgorod! What we had expected was not in the least what we saw, on arrival there, after a night journey by rail from Moscow. The whole place was under the domination of a grand up-to-date exhibition of Russian industries and fine arts, covering more ground than did the last affair of this kind at Paris, and so gay and brilliant that beside it the poor old annual Fair people have always journeyed so far to see was as an oil lamp beneath an electric arc light.

The town itself, an old fortified outpost of Russia, with white houses and churches and monasteries crowning the steep green Dyatloff Hills at the confluence of the Oka and Volga Rivers, is beautiful. Its historic Kremlin and Petchérsky Monastery, named for its predecessor in Kiev, are shrines beloved throughout the empire; and its industries, notably in the direction of ship-building, are of the first national importance. At the Fair held every year, Orient comes to barter wares with Occident, carrying away down the Volga to Asia the civilization and new ideas, as well as the merchandise, of Europe. During our visit to Nijni, Orient was overflowing the streets to an unusual extent. He had brought his wife and children to see the great Pan-Russian Exhibition; to ride in the electric tram-cars; to nibble sweets before the booths full of Petersburg and Moscow bonbons; to gape at the finery and furniture, the carriages and bicycles, the drawing-room cars, ambulances, pigeon posts, electrical devices, telephones and photography embodying the newest devices of latter-day advance in liv-

ing. I cannot readily forget the sensation of getting a seat in a crowded tram next to a moon-faced, gazelle-eyed daughter of Circassia, who wore over her flowing jetty locks a veil of gold-embroidered tulle, while her dress of black *crépon* was fashionably made in European style. She held upon her knees a pretty boy in English sailor costume, and her husband, a swart, good-looking fellow, hung on, *à l'Américain*, to a strap in the aisle. In one of the Exhibition buildings we encountered a high-class Tartar family, the woman and her two little girls, who looked like paper dolls, wearing veils of diaphanous white gauze over tiny red velvet caps embroidered with seed pearls. They were squeezing in to look at a case of European millinery, and I dare say they found the trimmed hats, bristling with aggressive bows and feathers, much more outlandish than I considered their own pretty head dresses.

Before we had been a day in Nijni we ceased exclaiming over the odd figures in the crowd. I seemed to have always faced a kaleidoscope, where Georgians, Persians, Bokhariots, Coreans, Japanese, Greeks, Roumanians, Tartars and Montenegrans, Russian officials, white popes and black popes, *moujiks* and their respective womenkind, composed the peep-show. And this was to be my lot every day henceforth, during the happy remainder of our stay in Russia!

When we first arrived, after driving about to the various hotels, to find no quarters of any kind available because of the crowd, we had been fain to put up with rooms in one of the "Danish Pavilions," a village of portable houses encamped for the season near the chief entrance to the Exposition grounds. It was an amusing if a trifle rude experience. The shadeless cottages, with *papier maché* roofs and walls hooked together in sections, were placed in rows upon a sandy plain. Their ability to catch and retain the hot sun of Nijni made them like burning-glasses. Although the beds and furniture were new, the

dirt of our rooms kept us mopping and cleaning till a late hour the first night, ere we dared go to bed. No sheets were provided, and before our bill was paid a maid came in to see that those we hired from the landlord were not packed up with our luggage!

For breakfast we had glasses of tea brewed by ourselves, with milk and fresh *kalatches* (rolls of white bread) bought from a vender who put her head into our window to offer us her wares. At luncheon and dinner we fared well, generally in one of the restaurants of the Exposition grounds, where sterlet, mushroom patties, birds, salad, sherbet, fruit and coffee followed a *zakouska* of bread, butter, radishes, olives, salt fish and fresh caviare; the latter such as no one who knows that dainty only from New York or London warehousemen can understand. After the artless fashion of newcomers, we generally ate so much of the *zakouska* that we had no appetite for the meal to which it was designed merely to give a zest. And, like most Americans who are water drinkers from preference if not from conviction, we had soon wearied of the bottled aerated waters that are the beverage of travel. It was a satisfaction, therefore, to make acquaintance with Russian *kvass*, a light beer brewed from cranberries and also from brown bread. Our habit was to order the pink kind one day and the brown the next. Since *kvass* possesses also the quality ascribed to claret by the Yorkshireman—"You can drink it and drink it, and you don't get any forrader"—we felt justified in freely quenching with it our Exposition thirst.

No fair-minded foreigner could have visited the last Pan-Russian Exposition without a feeling of sincere admiration for the taste, skill and intelligence with which its projectors there brought into view the very heart of Russian life. I will say little of externals, of the fifty-five Government buildings and the 117 structures erected by private individuals, grouped in a charming wide-

spread enclosure laid out with lawns and flower beds and fountains and kiosks, all lighted at night by a blaze of electricity. That kind of thing is as much a part of every Exposition as the turnstile and the ticket taker. The real value of the Nijni show was as an object-lesson in the practical geography and sociology of Russia. In the section of Agriculture, so closely blended with the industrial life of millions of their countrymen, the products of the Ural regions, Finland, the Baltic and Lake Districts, met with those of far Siberia. Exhibits from Novorossisk, the Ukraine, the Southwest, the provinces of Poland, Lithuania, Bicolorossia, the Central districts and the Volga led the way to a study of the tea gardens, vineyards, tobacco fields and fruit orchards of Caucasus and the South. In Sports, Furs and Fishing one was transported in spirit to the farthest inhabited places of the North; where trappers of animals and hunters of bones of by-gone mammals wrest a livelihood from the shores of frozen seas; where reindeer farmers live in the polar marshes; where, in the gleam of the everlasting sun upon ledges of pure alabaster veined with rose color, thousands of toilers amass, through dangers to which the outer world gives never a thought, such array as this of walrus and whalebone, oil, eiderdown, isinglass and salt fish, skins and stuffed birds and animals.

How do they live in Russia? The question was answered by looking away from the luxurious fittings and furnishings of the St. Petersburg and Moscow cabinet-makers to the Ostiac hide huts of West Siberia; from the skin tents of the pastoral Kirghiz of the Steppe to the log-built trading station of the Archangel fur hunter. In models of the peasants' homes of European Russia one saw the progress from humble handiwork to the higher artisan industries, such as painted icons, embroidered costumes and church vestments, book-binding, drawn lace work, ornamental leather and brass work and enameling on metal. There were samples of the

lapidary's art in the cups and trays and goblets of malachite, gypsum and jasper sent from Ekaterinburg; and from the deft fingers of the Cossacks of the Don, Orenburg, Urals, Kouban and Siberia a fine array of saddles and bridles, guns, swords and daggers made in the new workshops of the troops.

Of jewels, the display was dazzling. Parures of emeralds, rubies and diamonds from the court artificers of the cities contrasted with the barbaric splendors of turquoises, pearls, precious stones in the rough and semi-precious gems from the far Siberian mines and Central Asia. And to step out from these pictures of still life into the open was to see rough hunting dogs from the North and thoroughbred English saddle-horses such as supply the aristocracy of St. Petersburg and Moscow, near a paddock containing a drove of splendid horses from the Steppes.

Away from the Exposition to the Fair—the time-honored, famous congerie of merchants and their goods from all parts of Russia and the East. A long, rattling drive in *droshkies* and a stop. "But where is the Fair?" we ask each other, feeling rather flat. We were in the centre of a town full of shops, with ordinary streets and squares and posts for electric lamps. No artistic "effects" were to be seen—no honeycomb of booths as at Tangier; no camel trains as in Smyrna; no cross-legged, picturesque merchants as in the bazaar at Constantinople. It was not nearly as Oriental as the spectacle of "India" at Earl's Court, in London, to which one could at any time go for an eighteen-penny hansom fare and a shilling's entrance fee.

The Glavny Dom, or Municipal Building, where on the ground floor are found the arcades for the sale of the more choice and costly articles, is a fine modern building of stone that would be appropriate to Broadway. We walked through it, feeling sulky with disappointment. Things looked better when we left the highways for

the byways of commerce. We brightened over the little dark shops overflowing each with its especial merchandise; the piles of gaudy tin trunks used by the Russian peasants, that find their readiest sale to Persians; the icons, painted and gilded; the cowl staffs, church bells, felt boots, soaps, embroidered saddles and slippers, samovars, sweetmeats in gayest wrappers to go to the wide East! We liked also the boxes and crates and queer grass baskets of raisins, pistachio nuts, almonds, dates, sugared peaches, sandal wood, mastic, that had journeyed so far by Eastern caravan before they touched the waterway to Nijni. Heaping bags full of church incense stood open in narrow doorways, and at a little place powdered with the dust of indigo, two blue gentlemen smiled on us amiably as we stood upon their threshold looking in.

Driving to the Siberian docks, we passed through a region of rawhides, one of the most important commodities dealt in at the Fair. To supply these unpleasant looking piles of hairy skins, of which ragged Tartars are in charge, nomads in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia are employed the year round in collecting the spoils of horse, ox, camel, calf and goat. It is not a quarter that breathes of Araby the blest, and we are glad to be done with it. On the Siberian wharf, men numerous and busy as bees are unloading and distributing from boats and yards mountains of cloth, wool, cotton, wine and hides. We go on to the tea quarter, where we are received by a polite manager in a tiny office building covered outside with the woven grass integument of tea chests, and supplied with a telephone and desk and chairs. Here the atmosphere is spicy with odors of China and Ceylon. In one of the warehouses is shown a case of the "skin tea" that, packed in dogskins with the hair inside and brought overland from China, ranks much higher than the ordinary "sea-borne" tea. This is perforated for us with an iron implement, which returns to the surface with a sample of fragrant leaves,

ultimately presented to me as a souvenir. From tea to samovar is a natural transition; and from a shop brilliant with these brass and copper vessels we passed on to an emporium for the sale of sable furs and a visit to the Tartar mosque; by which time dinner was in order on the balcony of a hotel in the Fair. Our day ended merrily in listening to a concert by performers in Little Russian dress and others from Parisian *cafés chantants*, where the audience of foreign and provincial traders, sitting around little tables in a large hall, was even more interesting than the display upon the stage. There was music of a higher order to be had, for famous singers resort to Nijni every year, but this had the charm of novelty.

At four o'clock of a blazing August afternoon we leave Nijni to embark upon the broad bosom of "Matoushka Volga," the "little mother" of Russian rivers, for a voyage of nearly nine hundred miles to Sarátov. The steep wooden steps leading down to the boat wharf are encumbered with peasants and peddlers of fruits, dried mushrooms, sweets, bread, honey cakes, tins, straw and cotton goods and knick-knacks. The rich color, the movement, the clack of the crowd are fascinating, assuredly, but a sad interruption to historic revery. I am trying to recall why the Volga is the highway of Russia to the East; how it is connected with the Arctic, Baltic, Black and Caspian Seas; where it is in touch with the centre of Asia by means of the Trans-Caspian Railway, and what the new Siberian Railway is going to do for it and for the Empire in general. And here my vagrant fancy is assailed, turned this way and that—now by the party of swell Tartars who are disappearing into the staterooms next our own; now by the Corean grandee, with a double-decked black hat above his skull cap and field glasses strapped across his shoulders; now by the handsome old Persian merchant, with flowing silver locks and beard; then the Hindostanee, with opal eyes darkling under his turban;

the little Japanese electrician, who wears a straw hat and yellow kid gloves; the Italian professor with a fez, who is returning to Lake Como by way of Astrakhan and the Trans-Caucasus; the sad-eyed South Russian husband and wife, dark as mulattoes; the Jewish family from Kazán, displaying many diamonds; the debonair officer, with red lips and a divided blond beard, whose coat tails are lined with white satin, his boots embroidered, his spurs of silver; the high-born Russian dame, with the school-girl daughter whose plait of brown hair reaches to the hem of her short dress; the meek maid who follows these ladies carrying a satin cushion emblazoned with a coronet; the dreadful old female in a tumbled dressing sacque, her head covered with a lace scarf, her soiled fingers with costly rings, who at table—it must be said!—*laps* out of her spoon a soup made of fish and cabbage!

Down on the lower deck the peasants are spreading their mattresses and embroidered pillows to secure the best places for the night. In this country, where every third-class passenger by boat must take up his bed and walk, the piles of rainbow-hued luggage under which the *moujiks* and Tartars stagger aboard are astonishing. To the women it is left to carry the archaic carpet bags, the trunks covered with blue, green and red tinfoil, the baskets containing samovars and cups. For when Russian travelers have made their beds, their next step is to boil the samovar. As we pick our way among these groups, the air is already thick with rank odors of unwashed humanity, mingled with fumes of tea, *vodka* and tobacco. But then what pictures are revealed in the half-obscurity between the decks! Here, for the first time, I behold the Russian *moujiks* as I have dreamed of them, and from afar have studied this one of the most interesting classes of the world's poor brotherhood. In their soiled red blouses and cowhide boots upon big, ungainly feet, with their mops of tousled hair falling over simple or stolid faces, they sit or re-

cline in patient resignation to being walked over by everyone afoot. They are not vigorous of physique, thanks to a diet of gruel, black bread and cucumbers, with meat half a dozen times a year, bad water for their tea and worse *vodka* for their drink when they want to forget the hardships of their lives. But they appear cheerful enough, now, especially out in the stern of the boat, where the gay bucks among them have congregated to chew sunflower seed and crack jokes.

Off into the stream at last! A fresh breeze blows away the evil smell of the docks. The views of Nijni from the water are magnificent, and it is inspiring to see the barricade of masts around her busy quays. We zigzag between hidden sandbanks, the shifting character of which is the trial of navigation in this noble stream, our devious way indicated by a system of markings on the shores. On the high bluffs of the right bank there are houses, churches, monasteries, gardens, groves and farms; on the left only a low stretch of tawny sand, varied by osier beds and groups of sturgeon fishermen tugging at their nets. For convenience of date we have taken one of the slower boats to Kazán. As the pure air of field and forest salutes our nostrils, and the beauty and quiet of the scene succeed the turmoil of Nijni, with its Fair and Exposition in full blast, I could wish that we were going on in one of the old-time barges, poled along the still reaches of the river. I am soothed, charmed, cradled in gentle motion. I envy no one his journey up the Nile!

Our first halt reveals the method of landing passengers and freight universally in use on the Volga. The wharf is like a large black canal-boat, with offices on deck and a covered way through which people pass onto a flight of steep wooden steps leading to the top of the bluff, where vehicles await them. Down the one steep street of a hillside village pours a living torrent of men, red-shirted, blue-shirted, orange-shirted, with women and children as gay. No wonder the

Fair merchants say their gaudiest stuffs are sold to the Volga peasants! As it is supper time a brisk trade is carried on between the townspeople and our passengers of the lower deck, who swarm ashore, returning with their greasy caps full of bread, eggs, cooked fish, gooseberries and cucumbers—always cucumbers. There is a Russian proverb that runs: "Everything is nothing in comparison to Eternity, but Eternity gives place to a salted cucumber."

In a house near the landing we see a lamp glimmering before the holy picture in the corner of the living-room. As we move away the river is an image of peace. The moon comes out and silvers stream and shore. Very soon the lower-deck people begin to drop off to sleep. Some Tartars have spread their rugs upon the deck and are saying their prayers, without regard to lookers-on. Dozing under a lantern sits a Circassian in a sheep-skin overcoat (on such a night!), with a shaggy cap and a knife stuck in his belt. He, like most of the travelers on board from far away, has been to Nijni to see the show or to traffic, and is returning home. Near him an old Tartar peddler is counting the cotton pocket-handkerchiefs in his pack before he will trust himself to sleep. He wears a flowered blue *khalat*, full red trousers and a dirty white felt hat cocked over a skull-cap upon his shaven pate. During this expedition it is my constant amusement to take peeps at the third-class deck, and each time I am rewarded by a new type of character and nationality. At Kozmodemiant I am made glad by seeing two Tcheremisses—handsome, virile fellows, who appear to keep aloof from their neighbors, justifying their repulse for habits of isolation. They and the Mordvans of the government of Nijni-Novgorod, Samára and elsewhere are offshoots of the earliest settlers of Northern Europe—the Finns of the Volga. Once fierce warriors, they are now peace-abiding farmers, bee raisers and cattle kings, and their tongue is a dialect compounded of Finnish and Tartar.

At Nijni, hot; southeastward, hotter; at Kazán, where we arrive in the afternoon of the second day, hottest! The bank above the thronged landing, where there are several wharves and many steamboats, is deep in black dust that streaks the perspiring faces of the porters, stevedores and cabmen, who clamor and quarrel without cessation. As we sit in our *droshkies*, waiting for a train loaded with *telegas* to get out of our way ahead and looking at a row of restaurants and shops of as many colors as Joseph's coat, the tumult around us is indescribable. Of loiterers and peddlers of *kvass* and water, food and *falbalas* there is no end. I find in my lap a string of straw shoes, held there by a beseeching woman. In trying to look at a rather pretty Tartar girl with coral bracelets, an amber necklace and a cap covered with gold coins and pearls, who is attired in a species of flounced nightgown, and wears a knitted cotton veil, I collide with a tray of sticky cakes forced into my hands. Nothing but patience will see us through this noisy, pushing, disputing, teasing crowd of divers tribes and nationalities, the Tartar race predominant!

It is a long drive from the landing to the old Tartar city, now stationed at a safe distance beyond the havoc of Spring floods, although the river has been known to get up and cover even this wide intervening space. Ages ago the walls of Kazán overlooked the Volga's silver tide, but time has diverted the course of the stream to its present channel.

Everyone embarked on a round of travel must own to some weary moment of wonder why he came, of yearning for the ease and comfort left behind him. During our progress to the hotel, over a dusty, stony, foul-smelling road, we felt our first pangs of homesickness. Kazán, possessing a university, a theatre, several clubs and a resident population of wealthy people, is mediæval in her ideas of street-paving. When, however, we caught a full view of the picturesque city sitting upon her hills in the light

of sunset, her domes and minarets shining beyond the great Golgotha, or Monument of Skulls, erected of old to her soldiers who fell protecting her against the siege of the terrible Ivan, a better spirit crept into our ranks. The cure of ill-temper was completed on reaching the Hotel de France, where a pleasant, French-speaking landlady put us into occupation of rooms overlooking a pretty public garden, and gave us dinner in a broad, cool balcony, by the light of two shaded candles and the rising moon. Later that evening we had the pleasure of dropping in to tea with a young married couple, a lawyer and his wife, whose acquaintance we had made coming from Nijni. Our stroll to their house by moonlight through the square called the Black Lake, and the hospitality accorded us around a steaming samovar, may be only touched upon. It was on the return from this visit that one of us hazarded the execrable pun of pronouncing Kazán to be the cream of Tartary.

It was so hot next day that we were obliged to take *droshkies* for our sight-seeing; soon the rough pavements compelled us to go afoot; then we resorted again to vehicles, submitting in desperation to be racked by jolting over stones. We liked the Tartar quarter, with its grilled iron gates opening into courtyards, its barred and curtained windows suggesting the presence behind them of concealed Mussulman ladies, who, in fact, however, turned out in numbers in the street, some of them wearing their brocaded outer garments, with long sleeves, over their heads in lieu of veils.

Two cart-loads of Tartar loveliness, behind veils, passed us, carrying picnic baskets and a samovar. In the rear vehicle sat the one man of the party, a portly citizen in silk shirt and *khalat*. "Those people are going to the country," volunteered the Tartar driver to the member of our trio who could understand him. "And there they will lie all day in the grass and eat sweetmeats and drink tea."

We stopped at a mosque with a green roof and a delicate lancelike spire supporting a gilded crescent. A smart young fellow in blue and white striped cotton trousers, high boots, with yellow leather let into the heels, a cap and tight fitting coat, showed us its bare interior, with a pulpit and no seats. On the steps sat a beggar woman with three children and a baby, all five of them in reds of different shades. We awarded her a silver piece for her successful symphony of color.

Things to see in Kazán are an old Tartar tower, a Kremlin, a fine park and a Tartar bazaar. In withering heat we went to the Bogorodsky convent, to visit the most precious icon in all Russia—the far-famed “Our Lady of Kazán.” It was she, honored by Peter the Great; she in whose name Alexander III built the magnificent cathedral in St. Petersburg where the rulers of Russia go to pray for their country’s welfare, and her adventures are blended with the most stirring war history of the Empire. The steps of her convent church were like the waiting-room of a great city hospital, and pious ladies, who came out as we went in, were bestowing alms and consecrated bread upon the sufferers who thronged there. To our regret, the celebrated image was absent from her shrine, and the sweet singing of the nuns, in their black unicorn cowls over starched white caps, did not console us. Later in the day, having exhausted other methods of getting about in Kazán, we took to a tram-car, drawn by mules and

driven by a ragged and rusty Tartar.

Suddenly a stop occurred. *Gens d’armes* were clearing all obstructions from the street. There was a blast of martial music. We looked out ahead of the tram, to see, coming toward us, a religious procession, before which every knee in the street was bent—it must be—it was—Our Lady of Kázan! Soldiers preceded her, walking backward. After them a train of priests, in vestments of gold brocade, radiant in the beams of the fierce sun, who began to chant, and the roll of their deep voices was like thunder. Then came a gorgeous canopy, and under it we saw a jeweled picture, carried slantwise between two men, long ribbons secured to the frame being held by the nuns who followed. A great sapphire, the gift of a grand duchess, blazed upon the Virgin’s brow.

As the train drew nearer the Russian conductor of our tram fell upon his knees on the stones and began crossing himself and praying. Everywhere heads were bared, our little Tartar driver alone keeping his greasy old cap firm on the top of his stubborn pate. A policeman, discerning this, came up and angrily ordered him to take it off. The Mussulman demurred; the policeman waxed violent. When about to be dragged from his platform the little man yielded and, mumbling, did as he was bid. But when the policeman and soldiers had gone on, at the moment when the holy image was passing us, I saw him deliberately clap his cap again upon his head.

(Concluded in April number.)



TO AN IRIS

By Bliss Carman

THOU art a golden iris
Under a purple wall,
Whereon the burning sunlight
And greening shadows fall.

What Summer night's enchantment
Took up the garden mould,
And with the falling star-dust
Refined it to such gold?

What wonder of white magic,
Bidding thy soul aspire,
Filled that luxurious body
With languor and with fire?

Wert thou not once a beauty
In Persia or Japan,
For whom, by toiling seaway
Or dusty caravan,

Of old some lordly lover
Brought countless treasure home,
Of gems and silk and attar,
To pleasure thee therefrom?

Pale amber from the Baltic,
Soft rugs of Indian ply,
Stuffs from the looms of Bagdad
Stained with the Tyrian dye.

Were thy hands bright with henna,
Thy lashes black with kohl,
Thy voice like silver water
Out of an earthen bowl?

Or was thy only tent-cloth
The blue Astartean night,
Thy soul to beauty given,
Thy body to delight?

Wert thou not well desired,
And was not life a boon,
When Tanis held in Sidon
Her Mysteries of the Moon?

There in her groves of ilex
The nightingales made ring
With the mad lyric chorus
Of youth and love and Spring,

THE SMART SET

Wert thou not glad to worship
With some blond Paphian boy,
Illumined by new knowledge
And intimate with joy?

And did not the Allmother
Smile in the hushed dim light,
Hearing thy stifled laughter
Disturb her holy rite?

Ah, well thou must have served her
In wise and gracious ways,
With more than vestal fervor,
A loved one all thy days!

And dost thou, then, revisit
Our borders at her will,
Child of the sultry rapture,
Waif of the Orient still?

Because thy love was fearless
And fond and strong and free,
Art thou not her last witness
To our apostasy?

Just at the height of Summer,
The joy-days of the year,
She bids, for our reproof,
Thy radiance appear.

Oh, Iris, let thy spirit
Enkindle our gross clay,
Bring back the lost earth-passion
For beauty to our day!

To-night, when down the marshes
The lilac half-lights fade,
And on the rosy shore-line
No earthly spell is laid,

I would be thy new lover,
With the dark life renewed
By our great mother Tanis
And thy solicitude;

Feel slowly change this vesture
Of mortal flesh and bone,
Transformed by her soft witch-work
To one more like thine own;

Become but as the rain-wind
(Who am but dust indeed),
To slake thy velvet ardor
And soothe thy darling need;

To dream and waken with thee
Under the night's blue sail,
As the wild odors freshen,
Till the white stars grow pale.

A GENTLEMAN OF VIRGINIA

By John Regnault Ellyson

YOU say they are all alike—the men you meet; that they are all dull, dyspeptic, perfidious and, what's worse, they all dress in the prevailing style. Do you know, madam, unfortunately I am very much of your opinion. I look sometimes at my friends and I am afraid I grow confused; I can't tell the concert singer from my host or the little marquis from the butler. They have the same air and the same manners, and they talk in the same ventriloquistic whisper.

I assure you it wasn't always so. In the past we frequently met individuals and characters in the world and not mere automatons. Yes, and among those I have known there was one who might have pleased you, one whom you might have esteemed, one whom you might have sketched inimitably. To be perfectly candid, madam, I am thinking of one who died before you saw the light; I am thinking of my father.

He was born at a time when the good genii had a hand in the making of men, and modeled them after their own hearts and in divers moulds. He was long-drawn and heroic, like the gentleman of La Mancha, and exceedingly healthy and honest. He passed his best days in the fore half of the century, and cherished a few bold notions regarding politics and morals and the old problem of how folks should wear their garments. He was singular in this—that he never wore anything but what hung loosely around his limbs. His figure was loftier than mine, perhaps even slimmer in girth, and he had a finer tissue of muscles than I—sinews and mus-

cles that served him happily on many occasions, and gave him the nerve and suppleness of an acrobat.

Take heed now, madam, or you'll surely go wrong. My father was never a performer in the ring, nor, so far as I am aware, did he ever appear before the footlights. Really he had no ambition that way, but he had—as we all have, I fear—a pitiable fondness for the arena and the stage. I can't approve of his taste either, for he liked plenty of action in plays—melodramatic movement and sensation. His favorite drama was "Mazeppa." When some beautiful woman took the leading part he was always more than well pleased, and it so happened that no one ever played "Mazeppa" in our town without finding my father foremost among the gallant worthies of the pit.

But with him Byron's "Mazeppa" rivaled that of the dramatist. Doubtless you have heard me mention his own reading of the poem and how vivid it was, how dashing and fiery. Yet, believe me, it shouldn't have been so greatly wondered at, indeed, since no less a master than the elder Booth, whom he loved and wined and made much of, had been his tutor in the mysteries of the poem, and years afterward, when Booth listened to his pupil's recital, he scarcely disguised his emotion; he embraced my father warmly and said things that were at once flattering and memorable. In my earlier days I often heard my father speak of this scene—everybody had heard him speak of it, and he spoke, it is true, rather boastfully—and yet in such tones and with tears!

On this point, and in the matter of hats, my father exhibited vanity—and in nothing else. Plain and simple in his attire, he only insisted that his dark frock coat, his olive waist-coat and his buff trousers—cut, of course, in the old style—should be ample and loose about his limbs, so that he might stoop low or rise, turn suddenly or bend back or forward, without any accident. In a word, he chiefly desired to give himself free scope for every conceivable action. His shoes were made full large, and he oiled them, so you may imagine what a comfort they were to his feet. I think he never had on a pair of gloves in his life. He classed gloves among idle trumperies and abandoned them to the use of mincing demoiselles and dancing-masters. So please omit the gloves, madam, and add a capacious Byronic collar, a white shirt, unruffled, and a broad, soft neck-scarf of some shade of brown, or a black one, looped at his throat negligently, or not at all, and you have an indifferent picture of my father without his head, aye, and without his hat.

And his hat! Ah, as I live, that was a very serious study, the choosing of his head-gear. It was like a piece of devotional ceremony, as imposing, perhaps, as the taking of the veil or the kissing of the Papal slipper. It engrossed my father's faculties in a marked degree, and it required leisure, too, for its proper enactment. The occasion once at hand and the circumstances favorable, he would go then into Tappey's and there survey a score or two of fresh designs, muse over them one by one in detail, touch them lovingly, caress the fur as one caresses the cheek of an adorable child, and converse for an hour with the amiable Tappey, whom my father esteemed as unequaled in his craft and as a person of gentility besides, and of merit and rare good sense. Then, singling out one of the best beavers and setting it on the back of his head, he would take a decisive but brief view of himself in the surface of Tappey's mirror—the only times, I

believe, that he ever thus looked at himself, for he could brush his hair unaided by the glass as the parrot dresses his feathers, arrange his whole toilet in a twinkling; and as for shaving, he could shave, if need be, at night in a rolling stage-coach, he handled the razor so dexterously. And if at a glance, then, the quality and shape of the hat found favor in his eyes, he would pay what was asked without a murmur, and this was the end of the matter.

I say this was the end of the matter, because after that, apparently, my father gave no further consideration to the hat. At home he dropped it in any spot, but my mother usually undertook the charge of it, brushed off the dust, rubbed down the fur and hung it in the hall, and indoors elsewhere he removed it from his head and placed it at his side in order that it might be easily within reach, though where or on what it rested—whether between his chair and the stool or under the table, in a cobwebbed corner or on the edge of a coal-box—appeared immaterial. You see, it had come from Tappey's; it had been examined critically, chosen from among the pick of its kind, found unflawed, and purchased, and my father's mind—unless something extraordinary occurred—never reverted to the subject of hats until some months had gone by and the fancy suddenly struck him to have a new silk beaver.

The habit of wearing his hat on the back of his head—but certainly, madam, not this alone—made my father a somewhat conspicuous figure in his day. Small children and strangers, who turn into marvels all things in the least uncommon, of course bestowed upon him much puzzled and questioning attention, and even his friends in Andova and his affable neighbors, to whom he was quite as familiar a sight as the comely steeple of St. Paul's, halted frequently and looked after him as he passed and smiled—and only smiled. No one ever forgot himself and laughed so loud as to be heard—no one but Ned Buckingham.

It was he who once eased his soul by indulging in a fit of chuckling, and he had cause to remember his unblushing assurance, for it cost him dearly. Indeed, it was a sad morning for Buckingham and a full day's gossip for Andova. You must understand that my father, as he moved off from a group of friends, caught the shrill, piping sounds of mirth, and wheeled around, faced Buckingham again, and read him an astonishing lecture on manhood and manners—a discourse interspersed freely with good hits and deep thrusts and biting sarcasms—and so far appealed to the gathering crowd that all immediately took sides with my father and made the air as hot for Buckingham as a swarm of hornets. And yet think of it, madam—of the scandal of it! Why, until this day these two cronies had been like two eggs in a nest or two birds on a twig. They had been known to be such friends—they had been seen so often side by side. And now—how all Andova talked!

Some good souls remarked that, after all, Buckingham had behaved like an angel and said nothing. The fact is, the crafty old rascal stifled his feelings for the time and nursed his wrath in secret, and devised a most curious measure of retaliation. The design of his, though hazardous, was comic enough and novel; assured of his skill, he set his aim high and promised, by touching cleverly a sensitive point, to tell a droll story without the use of words.

And so he did. And for the purpose he lay in ambush and lurked there with no more conscience than a brigand. On three nights in one week he shot at my father, and the ball of the small rifle each time passed through the sleek new hat, midway between the crown's tip and the curled brim. On the first occasion, as you may suppose, my father was extremely alarmed, thinking it an attempt at assassination; on the second occasion, he was certainly more perplexed than alarmed, and pondered deeply; but it was only after the third time the same thing

happened that the truth flashed upon him.

Then for two days we scarcely recognized our father. He was so unlike himself. He seemed to be constantly expecting somebody, constantly looking for somebody, not in fear and with trembling, but as one seeking for a once-loved friend who had maimed or maligned or robbed him. The strange expression in his eyes meant mischief. He was eager and watchful abroad, and how restless he was at home—paying but little heed to domestic concerns, speaking in monosyllables—he who was ever so ready of speech, neglecting the children and even ignoring the friendly neigh of his pet horse, the old black stallion that he alone rode, that he himself fed and groomed, that he stroked and patted and fondled so often for half an hour at a time!

At length there was a rumbling in the air, and the storm burst early in the forenoon on the last day of the week. My father met Buckingham by chance on the upper floor of the Town Hall, and no compliments were wasted before the struggle began. They say it was a fierce contest between two vigorous and supple heroes, and continued with remarkable activity along the corridor and downstairs into the vestibule, where the majesty of the law stepped forward and interposed.

On the following Monday my father took me with him into court so that I might see in full glory the prodigious ruffles of the old Mayor and the wine-flushed sunflower of his face. And I saw other sights, too. My father appeared in fresh color and in splendid shape, but Buckingham—well, madam, he looked like my picture of "The Brigand," by Salvator Rosa—somewhat more than usually cracked, if you remember, and very much browned. And here again, as the provocation of Buckingham couldn't be proved, the honors fell to my father, who paid the heavier fine in consequence of his superior skill in the encounter.

It was thought on all sides that this

wound up the affair. My father resumed his accustomed manners and his interest in mankind, and in less than a month afterward, when financial misfortune came upon Buckingham, he was the first to give a gracious hand and kind words and material aid. That was his way. All rancor had oozed out in the sweat of the conflict; nothing remained but good will and the quick emotions of a warm heart. Buckingham also cherished the best feelings, apparently, and soon again became one of his boon companions in hours of relaxation and festivity.

Now, I wager, madam, you cannot imagine how my father managed a spree. You must know, once for all, that he did not go about and stir up things as some excellent people do, nor bring shame on his household—that he did not make mouths at the world nor play unseemly pranks on the thoroughfares; he was more discreet, though still whimsical enough. He picked his company first—kindred spirits and fraternal souls—and, with these and such supplies as good fellows need, he set out for a country place of his, called Eagle Roost, some few miles from town, and there, away from the multitude and life's vexations, he and the gay comrades diverted themselves agreeably by the streams or in the fields, and drank and played at games, and feasted abundantly for the space of ten days or two weeks. At home we very well knew when my father was preparing for a pilgrimage to the shrine at Eagle Roost, for, though he hinted nothing of it in so many words, and even feigned to be thinking of everything else, he really succeeded in hoodwinking none but himself. The most amiable man living unless grievously aroused, he grew more amiable than ever at these rare seasons. He redoubled attentions among us, babbled with the little ones, smiled and mused and smoked much, hung much around his good steed York, and gave him extra touches with the comb as he hummed his songs. There was a clean sweep, too; I mean he settled

all his accounts in full, opened a fresh book at the butcher's and the grocer's and at the last moment he slipped a purse slyly into my mother's pocket—a purse for use in emergency. Ah, madam, never did he look happier than on the eve of these curious departures, and there was never a picture of more pathos and naïve submissiveness and meekness than he presented on the night or the morning of his return.

Now, half a year or so after the combat in the Town Hall, Ned Buckingham declared his intention of leaving Andova and of residing for the future with his sons in the remote West—I forget just where. Truly surprised and deeply saddened, my father and others of course protested and reasoned with Buckingham, but protested vainly and reasoned to no purpose; then, finding him at last as fixed in his resolution as at first, they concluded to take matters philosophically and at the same time to do, as friends, something handsome in his honor while he yet lingered with them. And so it chanced that, after long debate, they could hit upon nothing wiser or more novel than a great festival at Eagle Roost.

It was on Wednesday, I think, that they started off as usual at dawn, laden with full stores, each on his ambling pad and cheery as the birds that chirped in the thickets along the way.

None knew just what happened among the jolly pilgrims in the next few days, though doubtless spirits flowed copiously and revelry ran high; but what took place under the clear skies of Andova on the Sunday following everybody knew and often talked of, at least in my father's absence, since for him the moving pageant of that morning was a frightful record, a lamentable remembrance. I would not have you believe that he lashed himself into fury or snarled or swore over it at any time—oh, no, my dear madam, he was forever dumb on the subject—but it could be easily seen that the quick had been cut and the heart laid bare. The whole affair, if

it did have its comic side, was yet something shameful to think of, as planned and ingeniously conducted by Buckingham, who had so long covered malice well under the show of genial good fellowship. The others had no hand in it; indeed, for many reasons they bitterly deplored it, and would have made short work of Buckingham could he have been found; but the sly old dog had wisely packed off between that very noonday and the night-time.

My father, I regret to say, must have been profoundly intoxicated on the morning in question, for otherwise Buckingham would assuredly have failed; the success of the design threw a sad light on my father, whom he must have beguiled into drinking heavily, or whom he doubtless drugged; the comrades, too, had been drugged or made bewitchingly drunk, as none of them either witnessed the incident or suspected Buckingham's craft.

Sunday was a fine day, serene and charming, deep in the Midsummer season, yet cool and breezy. At a little before eleven in the morning, the avenue on which the churches open became astir with the pious of Andova, wrapt in contemplation, and the reputable sages, haughty or grave, and the worthy gossiping people, nodding courtesies at passing friends or gathering in groups. There were glimpses of vivacious faces, the flutter of airy raiment, the whisper of light words. The bells were ringing and the world was happy. But suddenly there arose a singular commotion at one end of the avenue—

clouds of dust, the sounds of voices and the faint clatter of hoofs on cobble stones. Then soon appeared in the distance a horse, unbridled and unguided, chased by a rabble-crew of black, ragged lads, and, as the capering animal advanced into clear view, the people saw the most astonishing sight that ever met the eyes of gray-beards and devotees. Men stood like graven images for the moment and women crimsoned and shivered.

Ah, madam, it was indeed my father's stallion, prancing as best he could, with head flung high, nostrils blown wide, mane tossing in the air and all his dark flanks wet with foam; and on his back, fast-bound, in the manner of Mazeppa, lay the lean body of my father, smitten and bruised, clothed in his long white slumber-gown and crowned with his tasseled nightcap.

Bless me, you are blushing and shedding tears and smiling, madam. I thank you; I did the same on that occasion. I thank you, too, for the grace of your fair-spoken wishes in behalf of my father. No, he was scarcely afterward the man he had been—even the tone of his voice changed; he grew suspicious of people and rather sceptical, I fear, and quite timid. And yet some good came out of the evil; there were no more episodes at Eagle Roost; the place was sold and the money put into parcels of uptown land, that enhanced so much in value as to enable my father to die rich; but on my faith, madam, I do not know whether he died the happier for that.



A MARCH IDYL

THE whirlwind wildly whirls and screams,
Till on the tossing tree
The antique gobbler sleeps and dreams
He is a duck at sea.

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

MY LADYE'S HEART

MY Ladye is a gentle thing,
 Her sympathies are quick and keen,
 A tale of woe her heart will wring,
 She would not wound a fly, I ween.
 A kinder maid was never seen;
 In cruel sports she takes no part—
 Angelic are her look and mien—
 My Ladye with the tender heart.

And yet grave charges I can bring
 Of cruelty against my queen;
 Her hat, so brave with breast and wing—
 Her sealskin, with its silken sheen—
 While lambs that never grazed the green
 Died ere they lived to make her smart;
 How *can* her eyes be so serene?
 My Ladye with the tender heart.

And then her menu! (Oh, the sting
 Of facts like these, which song demean!
 Yet truth is truth.) She whom I sing
 Dines well on dead things, fat and lean;
 The market, with its gory scene,
 To her is like a hall of art,
 Although her smile is infantine,
 My Ladye with the tender heart!

ENVOI

Death, you are courtier to my queen;
 That she may thrive you do your part,
 Nor does her protest intervene—
 My Ladye with the tender heart.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.



MERELY A REHEARSAL

YOUNG CHINNINGTON (*passionately*)—Mr. Gillte-Edge, I love your only daughter—love her madly, devotedly, wildly, and with all the strength and might of my being! I adore her as a miser loves his hoard of yellow gold, worship her as an idolator worships his fetish. Without her sweet presence ever at my side life to me will be but one long, dreary—

OLD GILLTE-EDGE (*savagely*)—I don't care what it will be, young man—you can't have her, and that settles it!

YOUNG CHINNINGTON (*cheerily*)—Oh, all right! all right! If one don't ask he won't receive, you know. Say, old man, now that it is all over, what do you think of that as a sample of my elocutionary ability, anyhow? Pretty smooth, eh? You see, I had decided to start out as a public reciter in case you refused to accept me as a son-in-law, and I rather guess it's up to me now, all right enough. Well, so long. No hard feelings on my side, I assure you. Any time you happen to be in a town where I am giving my entertainment, just mention your name at the door, and it sha'n't cost you a cent to see the show.

"IF I HAD A MILLION"

By Charles Vale

"IF I had a million—" began James Eglinton, looking thoughtfully at the fire.

"If you had a million—" echoed Mrs. Eglinton, just a trifle sarcastically.

James continued to look thoughtfully at the fire.

"Well," said his wife, impatiently, "if you had a million?"

"I should be happy."

"No doubt. But what would you do?"

"Very little."

"I can quite believe you."

"I should be happy," said James, still looking at the fire and speaking with great deliberation, "because I should be able, without any effort or trouble on my part, to make things so delightfully uncomfortable for you."

"How *very* kind of you! How thoughtful! How generous!"

"Now," pursued James, ignoring her remarks, "you have the advantage of me; you have me, in fact, completely at your mercy. You are my wife, and my wife must be decently clothed, decently lodged, decently cared for. I can do no less—for my wife. She is also my enemy. I am sorry. She has broken her covenant. I keep mine, so far as I am able to understand it. I can do no less, without shame."

"No less! Why not more, dear, self-righteous man?"

"More is not needed. No woman could complain, reasonably, when placed in the position which has been secured for you. That is how I have kept my implied agreement. I have given you a decent position. It so

happens that my income will not allow me to do more."

"So you say."

"Exactly. But if I were a millionaire I should be able to do much more. I could accomplish great things for my wife—if I wished. I could buy for her jewelry—marvelous jewelry—such as few women can hope to possess; diamonds, immensity of diamonds, as immensity is counted among precious stones; pearls, great strings of flawless pearls, which empresses and queens might covet. I could give her horses and carriages, fine, high-stepping horses, and carriages of every description—not one poor solitary brougham. I could secure for her free and willing admission into the great social life which all women of her position have dreamed and wondered and thought about as the most desirable of all the things they would covet, if they dared to let themselves hope so wildly and absurdly. I could buy for her dresses, expensive dresses, which are really works of art, and which would set off her beauty perfectly and make her irresistible. I could purchase a house—or houses—which would more than satisfy her natural craving to be the mistress of an important and thoroughly well equipped residence. I could give her thousands of dollars, tens of thousands, for her own private use—money which she could spend freely and unregretfully, knowing that more would follow it. Yes, I could do very striking things for my wife if I had a million."

She listened to him with increasing amazement.

"What has made you think of all this?" she asked, with a little catch in her voice.

"I have learned lately to think a good deal about my wife, and what I could do for her, if I had a million."

She opened her fan with a sigh. "I wish you had, James. Oh, I wish you had!"

"Do you?" He smiled grimly. "So do I, because, as I said, I could make things so excellently unpleasant for you."

"Unpleasant? With diamonds, pearls, jewelry of all kinds, dresses from Félix, horses, carriages, lovely houses and as much money as I wanted! What *do* you mean?"

"I mean this: What I have done for you so far I have been compelled to do. I owed it to myself as well as to you. But I have done enough. Your position is a good one. You could not rightfully grumble in the slightest degree if it were never improved. And it would not be improved if I were a millionaire. No, if I were as rich as Cræsus I would not do for you one thing more than I have done. I would not buy for you a single precious stone; you have enough jewelry—for such a woman! I would not give you one penny more than I give you now. That would be your punishment—to know that if I would I could do all that I have said; to long for the things; to crave for them with bitterness of spirit and with anguish; to realize that they were, so to speak, absolutely in your grasp, and yet discover that you could not gain them. Eh, it would be charming. Would it not? Think of it. . . . to know that all these things were possible, quite possible, and that they were denied simply as a punishment. Ah, you would writhe then!"

"You—you despicable—!" She could get no further.

"Glad you appreciate the extreme beauty of the situation. You see, I should not require to reproach myself in any way. I am already giving you more than is fair and just. I am generous, exceedingly generous. If I had the million I should still give you more than you deserve by keeping things as they are. You might feel sorry then for the thousand torments which you have inflicted on me."

"Oh!"

"Now, you don't miss such things. You know they are far beyond our means, and you have not thought of them as possibilities. On the other hand, you have taken what I could give you without a single sensation of gratitude. You have demanded money up to the extreme limit which could be squeezed from my business. It has been given to you. It was not worth while to refuse. I do not like paltry methods of retribution. Besides, as I have said, I owed you something, and it is as well to carry out a bargain not too grudgingly. But had I declined to do what you wished, you would doubtless have made a great fuss, but you would not have been really grieved. If I had a million, however, you would, of course, want so many things, big things worth fortunes, and the loss of them would, under the circumstances, be insufferable. Yes, it would be fine to have a million. . . . to feel that one could meet you satisfactorily—on a large scale, on a heart-breaking scale—not in petty, insignificant ways."

"Ah! How I hate you! How I hate you!" she cried, and flashed from the room. Her husband, nervously flicking his fingers, remained where he was. "One score to me," he said, wearily. His face looked pale, drawn and haggard as he gazed at the fire.



A QUESTION OF CASTE

By Gelett Burgess

I

“MARY,” said Miss Threnstone, “I’m utterly bored!”

“Yes, Miss Threnstone,” replied her maid, with a well-assumed indifference.

“What shall I do about it?” her mistress went on.

“Oh, I suppose there are lots of things to do, in New York, Miss Threnstone; there’s the theatre——”

“Mary, Mary, I thought you were intelligent!” interrupted the lady. “Haven’t you anything really worth while to suggest? Now what do you do when you are bored?” The question came to her lips thoughtlessly, but, at the idea, she grew almost interested.

“I don’t know,” said Mary, a little puzzled. It was not at all usual for her mistress to talk to her like this, and she hardly knew whether to take it as a real invitation to confidence, or as a mere careless whim, but she added, slowly, “You know, Miss Threnstone, it is a little stupid downstairs, sometimes, with only Thompson and James and the cook. I run out to Central Park when I can, but I don’t care for the servants around here, much, so I generally go alone, or with James. I do like the theatre, though. I don’t see why you should ever be bored, Miss Threnstone—you can do anything you want to, can’t you?”

“Mary,” said Miss Threnstone, “I’ll tell you something. You know how I’m in the habit of treating my servants, and you know, perhaps, how other ladies in New York treat theirs; I don’t, I’m sure. But I know

some of them have absurd ideas of making friends of them, and all that, which must be very embarrassing. It would be to me, at any rate, if I were a servant. I never did care for a friendship that was all on one side. If I were in service, now, I’d want it to be a purely business relation, and I shouldn’t want any patronizing, or any affectation of an interest in my welfare, and all that nonsense. Of course, one wants to be treated as a human being with emotions and a certain amount of self-respect, but I have no more curiosity in regard to my maid’s private affairs and her relatives and her economies than a business man has with his clerk’s—and I don’t expect her to be inquisitive about mine.”

Mary had begun to be a little nervous, for this tone was unlike Miss Threnstone’s usual manner, so she waited for her to go on, busying herself with the dressing-table perfunctorily, while her mistress continued:

“I think that is the way a lady should treat her servants, Mary, though it’s too civilized a view to find much favor; but you are an intelligent girl—the most intelligent maid I ever had—and so this talk is an exception to my rule, for I am bored. But I wouldn’t impose on you for the world, Mary, and I have no right to be confidential unless you allow me. I wouldn’t like it myself, you understand. But you don’t mind, do you, Mary?” she asked, with a whimsical tone.

“Oh, no, Miss Threnstone.”

“I almost wish you *did* object,” said the lady, in an abstracted way, for she did much of her thinking aloud when she had an impressible

audience. "It might prove you still more intelligent, you know."

"But you forget that I'm *not* bored," hazarded the maid. It was the first original remark she had ever made to her mistress, and she felt that the occasion justified the omission of the "Miss."

"Well, I'm breaking all rules today, and so must you. You don't consider this tone an impertinence, then?"

"No, indeed, Miss Threnstone. I'm perfectly willing to amuse you any way I can—only I don't quite see how."

"You don't know, perhaps, that friends call me 'that eccentric Miss Threnstone.' It's another way of saying that most of the things they enjoy, or think they do, tire me. They'd call it eccentric for me to talk to you like this."

"You see, it's a fad of mine to be very frank. I don't know whether you do it with your friends, but it's almost my sole amusement. I can afford to, you know, because I'm really quite well off. It costs an awful amount to be frank, unless you're very clever, when it is called rudeness. But I mustn't do all the talking. Really, you *must* answer me, Mary. I don't much mind how."

"Oh, Miss Threnstone, what can I say? I'm not clever and well-read like you, and I can't think so quickly. No one ever talked to me like this before in my life, and it makes me feel so ignorant and cheap to sit down and have you talk to me as if I was a lady."

Miss Threnstone walked over to her and put her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Oh, Mary, excuse me; I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," she said, kindly. "Of course, it's no use; we can't either of us be natural, I suppose; I don't know why. I'm not really as ill-bred as I seem, but you *are* a very bright girl, Mary. I should know that as well as anyone."

Mary, in spite of all attempts to control herself, broke into tears at this and went toward the door to leave the room. Miss Threnstone

took her hand and led her back gently. "You mustn't go like that," she said; "I couldn't bear it. I'd never forgive myself."

"I never can be anything but a servant," Mary sobbed. "I never can. It's terrible to see what chances some girls have, and to know you can never hope to be one of them. But I've honestly tried to be the best maid any lady ever had. I've just worshipped you, Miss Threnstone, from the day I came here. There's not a lady like you in this city, I'm sure, whether you're eccentric or not. If you could have heard the way I've stood up for you, and lied for you, to keep the servants from knowing what was none of their business to know! You've been so kind to me that I've gone up to my room and cried, many a time, and the servants all make fun of me for it. There's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you, Miss Threnstone."

Miss Threnstone was as undemonstrative a person as a woman can be, and the attitude of conferring a favor was the hardest of all poses for her to take. Generous of her wealth, her time and even of herself, when her heart was attracted, nothing embarrassed her so much as the act of giving. She was therefore a little troubled at the tensivity of the situation which she had brought about. She disliked the kind of excitement that she called "dramatic," as most persons hate a "scene." So she set herself to calm the girl, and if this interest in the maid's point of view was, like all her interests, analytical, it was neither cold nor unkind. She had discovered a new sensation—a human problem that she had never noticed before. "So you think I am clever?" she continued, after the girl was calmer.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Mary. "Everybody says that!"

"And you think I am—well—kind?"

"Oh, you *are*!"

"And"—Miss Threnstone was managing her mouth strictly—"handsome, say?"

"Yes, yes! You are the most——"

"Never mind that, then," Miss Threnstone said. "Of course, you know, too, that I have a sort of fortune, and I have a place—a position, in fact—in a certain social set, though not among the persons whose names you see in the papers, perhaps. And, what is more envied than all that, I am absolutely independent, and old enough to do as I choose. Now, all this would make many persons happy."

"Aren't you happy?" Mary asked, with big brown eyes.

"Well, I won't say exactly unhappy, but a bit tired of it all. How would you like it?"

"Oh, I never would know how to do all that you can do, because I've always been poor; but I'd like to have money—of course, anyone would."

"What would you do with it?"

"I think I'd use it to make myself as much like you as I could."

"This is very embarrassing, Mary; indeed, you mustn't talk like that! Really, you must be sensible!"

"Oh, of course, I know I never could *do* it, Miss Threnstone; don't think I meant that. I'd have to study and see people—that would help me a lot—and I never would dare to do that!"

"That's all nonsense, Mary; you know all the outward and visible signs as well as I do, and no doubt better. You've seen as much of the conventional side of society as I have, and you'd feel quite at home. As for an education—well, I wish it *were* necessary! No one in this town would ever know that you hadn't grandmothers enough, take my word for it. Do you know, my child, that you're quite good-looking? Go and try that cheval glass."

Mary herself was smiling by this time, and she rose good humoredly and stood in front of the mirror.

"A woman who can look at herself in the glass and not lift a finger to touch a lock of hair like that little one on your forehead, well—she'll pass," said Miss Threnstone. "That is, of

course, if she knows what it's there for!"

The maid had heard asteisms of this sort from her mistress often enough before to understand the mood, and she began to enter the game more boldly. Miss Threnstone continued, following the conversation wherever it led her, for this was quite the kind of languid sport of which she was fondest. It mattered little to her where she arrived with the discussion, provided the end did not come as a surprise. She hated surprises above all things, for they robbed her of anticipation. She was not averse to the excitement, but she got the greatest pleasure out of building logical climaxes.

"Don't you think you could manage a dinner, Mary?" she said.

"Oh, if I could talk well."

"Pshaw! If you couldn't talk better than Miss—well, we mustn't use names; but you know all the forks and the finger-bowls, don't you?"

"Oh, yes; I think I would know how to act, because I've waited on the table."

"The hardest thing is to know when to take the initiative and when to follow your leader," Miss Threnstone went on, as if to herself; "that's the last degree—the instinctive sense of the relative importance of things. Unless you're born to it, and are absolutely sure of your position, it takes a deal of tact and experience to teach you that it's quite the proper thing to dare to be yourself occasionally. It's a question of caste. It's like being able to do a favor to an inferior without condescending. But you have plenty of common sense—I wish I were as sure of your spirit."

"Miss Threnstone," said Mary, slowly, "I've never intended to tell you—but you know you told me once I might borrow your books—well, I've read almost every book you've had in your room. I'm a little behind, for I didn't want to take the very latest ones, but I've read them, just to try and keep up with you, all by myself."

"Why, Mary! I haven't read a quarter of them myself," and the

lady resisted an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh aloud. "And do you go to the opera?" she said.

"I've been to see some of the things that you went to," confessed the girl. "You've been so good about letting me off."

"Where do you sit?"

"Of course, I have to sit up pretty high, but I always try to get on the side opposite your box. I can't really see much of you, Miss Threnstone, and so I hope you won't think I have been inquisitive or taking liberties, but I could see the gentlemen going in and coming out."

"Mary," said her mistress, "you're perfectly delicious! I don't think you'd have much trouble in talking to those men. I shall really have to take you some day. But no; that would trouble you, probably. You'll have to go alone. I suppose, now, you really listen, and watch the stage."

"Why, of course—yes. Don't you?"

"Well, sometimes, when the men aren't interesting, and they often aren't. By the way, perhaps you know some of the men, too—one can never tell nowadays."

"Oh, no, indeed, Miss Threnstone—you're joking, of course!"

"But you've seen some of them here," persisted Miss Threnstone; "you know them by sight, at any rate. Tell me, what do you think of Mr. Sentinel? This is positively indecent of me! I suppose some ladies do gossip with their maids, and I never thought of myself in that class—but really, you know, this is simply too thrilling!"

"Do you really want me to say, Miss Threnstone?"

"Oh, I'm in for it now," said her mistress. "Yes, please."

"Well—I don't think he has a sense of humor," asserted the girl.

For the first time in months Miss Threnstone shouted with laughter. "Now, where, in heaven's name, did you get *that* phrase?" she asked, as soon as was possible.

"Why, I read it in the 'Nightin-

gale,'" said Mary, not without a puzzled sense of having made a better shot than she had intended.

"Now, Mary, do you mean to say that you have read the 'Nightingale?'" Miss Threnstone said, wiping her eyes. "Why, you're absolutely bewildering. See here! you've been to the opera and listened, a thing I haven't done for years; you could tell by his looks that Mr. Sentinel hadn't a sense of humor, and I was so busy flirting with him that it took me three dinners and a house-party to find it out—and you've read all the books everyone is talking about—you have even read the 'Nightingale' and—quote it! Why, there aren't ten girls in town that have such a record! You ought to be the lady and I the maid."

"Oh, Miss Threnstone," said Mary, laughing too, "the idea! How impossible!"

"Do you mean that I wouldn't be able to make a good maid?"

"Oh, I'm sure you're clever enough to do anything you try, and there's nothing very difficult about being a maid. You only have to not see things and not hear things and not say things and not laugh——"

"Why, that's just what I've been doing all the Winter, Mary."

"And keep your temper——"

"That's easy; it's never worth while to care."

"And keep on the good side of the butler——"

"Really! But I *am* on the good side of Thompson already."

Miss Threnstone was positively amused; and now, looking for the reason, she saw the climax approaching which her soul loved. It was the inevitable logical conclusion to this train of thought. She and Mary should change places! So now she played with the little sensation, wishing it were practicable to carry out such an amusing drama—that part, rather, which involved Mary; she had no desire for such a violent change in her own environment. Were she to "take up" her own maid it would shock her friends and make a deal of talk, but that didn't matter if Mary

could be induced to accept the proposal and if it weren't too much trouble arranging the preliminaries. There was, besides, a moral consideration.

"I hear a good deal nowadays," Miss Threnstone began, tentatively, "as to the precise effect of 'over-education,' as they call it—of making the poorer classes dissatisfied with their circumstances, by showing them some of the pleasures of those who consider themselves a little more cultivated. I've always thought that whoever has the possibility for growth will find the means somehow, with the greater effect for having fought for it. But I do think we can help in broadening a person's horizon sometimes, and I have faith that it can never permanently injure a person to be shown things as they really are. What do you think, Mary?"

"I don't know, Miss Threnstone—I don't care so much about being happy or contented, but I do want to see things and know things. I'd like to get outside of my own life and see what other people do after the door is shut on me!"

"Why, that's just what we began with, Mary; that's what it is to be bored—to be tired of one's self. The only difference is, that I am too lazy to make any effort. Now, I should think that being a lady's maid might be very interesting after one had once begun, and I suppose you think it would be still more interesting to be a lady, don't you?"

"Why, of course, Miss Threnstone."

"Well, would you like to try? Would you accept the chance, if you were offered it, and take all the consequences?"

"Oh, I should be too frightened," Mary said, in excitement.

"That's just it; and I should be too lazy. I suppose we would better stay as we are." Miss Threnstone almost hoped the subject would be finished here.

"Do you mean that you'd be willing to give me the chance to be a lady—like you?" Mary asked, in surprise.

"Yes; if I were sure that it wouldn't be cruel, I suppose I could be just that eccentric."

"I think I know what you mean," Mary replied, very deliberately, "and I think I'd dare take that risk."

"No!—really?" demanded Miss Threnstone. She had been much interested in the discussion as long as it was pure speculation, and had been amused at watching the working of her maid's mind, but now the prospect of having her theories converted into actions disturbed her more than she cared to acknowledge to herself. She feared that they would "lose in the translation," and yet she had built up this climax so logically that she had too much pride to recede. As long as she could go ahead, one step at a time, her mind forbade her to withdraw.

"I suppose I might arrange it," she said. "I might make you my companion till you were broken in to meeting my friends, and then I could set you up for yourself, perhaps—launch you and settle an income on you, so that you would be free to do as you please—I've helped girls before this, and I could afford it easily enough, but I should feel a good deal of responsibility in your case, especially if you depended on me for advice. You'd have to promise not to do that, you know. I'd help you all I could on questions of fact, but not on questions of conduct. I'd coach you on all the conventions if you'd never ask me what you ought to do. That seems cold-blooded, doesn't it?" Indeed, it did seem cold-blooded to Miss Threnstone herself, and she had purposely been so, in order to discourage the girl and avoid the issue.

"No," said Mary, calmly, "I should be willing to risk all that. Of course, I should be frightened at first, and the question would be whether I could keep from showing it. If I was sure it would amuse you and be worth your while, I'd be willing to do my part. I understand, now, what you'd want. It's like if you wanted to see the play from the front of the theatre without bothering to have to be stage manager or prompter."

This lucid presentation of the case carried Miss Threnstone merrily over the threshold of action, and made her resolve inevitable. But she insisted on one last condition.

"If you have the brains to see all that," she said, "you'll have to do a good deal more than I first expected of you. If you can really amuse me, Mary, I'll give you *carte blanche*. I'd like to see the metamorphosis, but if you're going to become a butterfly you must spin your own cocoon. You must arrange all the preliminaries, do you understand?"

"Yes," said Mary. "I'll see to changing the servants and clothes, and all that."

"Well," said Miss Threnstone, with a little yawn, "we'll consider it settled. I had no idea that I could get out of it so easily. I won't have to think for you, or bother about anything—only look on. You won't mind my watching you, will you, Mary? Of course, I shall do it in a ladylike way, as I would at any of my friends, and I won't take advantage of my position. Though if you care to invite me behind the scenes I'll be glad to call on the leading lady."

"Miss Threnstone," said the girl, "I can't say anything to thank you for all this. I don't know how, and it confuses me to think of, but you surely know how I must feel! I know well enough what people would say of such an agreement, upstairs and down, but I'll promise not to bore you with the preparations, or with any regrets if it is a failure. I've just *got* to do it, for I shall never have such an opportunity again, and I'll take the step all alone, too. When shall we begin?" She spoke low and rapidly, as if the suspense was hard to bear. She would have been handsome, as she stood there with her eyes shining, but that her small chin did not quite bear out their expression of courage.

"I'll send you up a check-book tomorrow," said Miss Threnstone, a little more excited herself than she would have thought possible over a "logical climax." "As soon as you get it you may consider yourself your own mistress."

II

WHEN Miss Threnstone returned to New York from a month's trip in the West she brought with her a Miss Daintor, whom she introduced to her acquaintances as half-friend and half-companion—"a very sweet girl, though a little timid, not having gone out much." The two ladies began a series of little receptions and parties, and it had been so rarely that the eccentric Miss Threnstone entertained that there was much curiosity at her hospitality. Few who were invited failed to appear to see the latest *protégée*. No girl favored with Miss Threnstone's protection could be ignored, and Miss Daintor came in for a good deal of reflected consideration, besides what was due her beauty and personal charms. When Miss Threnstone went so far as to interest herself in commonplace teas and dinners, and to awake to so many conventional duties that had never before attracted her, evidently on Miss Daintor's account, the younger lady was accepted with many manifestations of cordiality. What few questions were asked were answered by her patroness with characteristic brevity.

Miss Threnstone had heretofore enjoyed that much-envied position in society where one is invited everywhere and goes nowhere. She had made the most of being in rather delicate health; indeed, she confessed that it was a fad with her to pose as an invalid, and she was wont to recline on a couch, clad in black velvet, white silk and ermine, entertaining her visitors in a mockingly soulful way. So now, when it was told that she was actually calling upon her old acquaintances, there was considerable surprise at the very queer places that she consented to favor. No one could understand why she, who could go to the Whites and the Blacks, should prefer seeing such persons as the Carroll-Lewis. Miss Threnstone was fond of saying that the Carroll-Lewis let one stay an hour, and you had a chance to get rested, while no one was allowed more than ten minutes at the Whites

and the Blacks; footmen on the sidewalk and the yellow carpet down the Blacks' steps frightened her.

Miss Daintor would have died rather than mention such things in that way—as if one had never been used to a butler! It was hard for her to understand how a lady could voluntarily call attention to any informality in her own establishment. There were subtleties of frankness that she noticed only in Miss Threnstone and a few others who were surest of their positions, and she gave up attempting to solve the problem. She was the most perplexed at their treatment of the servants. Almost all the persons in their set ignored the servants' presence absolutely, looking directly through them, or using them thoughtlessly as hat-trees, as the case might be, and they discussed things before them that one ought to hesitate before confiding to an intimate friend. Miss Daintor knew that while the thoroughly bred servants (and she knew there were thoroughly bred servants as well as thoroughly bred mistresses) made a point and a pride of not hearing, yet she often shuddered to think of the talk and gossip downstairs. Miss Threnstone not only knew the old servants from the new, but she made nicer distinctions, and had some intuitive sense of superpropriety that enabled her to address them personally, almost familiarly, at precisely the proper time, embarrassing neither them nor anyone else.

At the Carroll-Lewises' Miss Daintor was much more ill at ease than at such places as the Whites' or the Blacks'. She was at her best in a ten-minute call, where the gossip and small talk flowed smoothly in shallow channels. She had learned to chatter, as she had learned to dance, and the conversational paths seemed to be as inevitable as the figures in the cotillions. The Carroll-Lewises, however, frightened her, for there the talk ran more deeply, and they usually had clever men who smoked. Miss Daintor grew to fear a clever man who smoked more than anything else in her routine, and she had always to

take water and defend herself in current fiction at such times as there was no escape. She subscribed to all the literary reviews, including some English weeklies, the names of which Miss Threnstone had given her with the assurance that few of even the cleverest men who smoked ever read. Gentlemen attempted personalities at times, but she became able to smell a burning heart-to-heart talk in season to extinguish it before it broke out too violently. She especially disliked and avoided what Miss Threnstone called "real people," for they had many ways of terrifying her. Altogether, it was her desire to keep on the thick ice of conventionality, not being yet ready to fall in love.

The candle-talk which always ended the day was a great delight to Miss Threnstone. The whole experiment had turned out far more successful than she had dared to hope, for Miss Daintor was an apt pupil in Vanity Fair and a clever manager of the little fund of worldly wisdom that experience had given her. Her comments were very refreshing to a person of Miss Threnstone's fancy, and that lady had often much difficulty in concealing the pitch of her amusement. These gay little breezes blew, too, at the most unexpected times—at Miss Daintor's confession of excitement when a gentleman first helped her on with her cloak, at Miss Daintor's daring little attempts at palmistry, and at her never-ending wonder that so many persons were so easily fooled with such a small stock of audacity.

For Miss Daintor had gone on, step by step, never venturing until she was pretty sure of her ground. With women she had little to fear; she knew their terminology and was facile with their "shop," and she chose only the *mondaines* and the most slippery talkers. Here, too, Miss Threnstone could assist her on "questions of fact," as a chamberlain tutors a princeling. But she was less sure of herself with the men, even with the frock-coated figures that most attracted her. To be sure, she could

use her current fiction phrase-book on these, and she wore the theatre to tatters in the effort to amuse them, for they usually came to her in a state of limp ataraxia, and expected to be talked to. At the Carroll-Lewises' the men did most of the amusing themselves. They stood with their backs to the fire, or looked out of the window with affected naïveté and quoted "Alice in Wonderland" till, in spite of herself, Miss Daintor knew most of that mysteriously apposite book by heart and sickened of it the more familiar it grew. The days when she had read the "Nightingale" because Miss Threnstone read it had gone by. It was not at all necessary to know your "Nightingale" at the Whites' or the Blacks'. There was nothing left, then, but to flirt with the men, or to learn golf, which was the White and Black equivalent of the Carroll-Lewis nonsense hobby. But flirting, according to Miss Threnstone, was a "question of conduct," and she would give no advice.

"It's a sacred mystery that has many degrees," Miss Threnstone had laughed; "as many as there are women. It is usually attended with human sacrifice. It is like finding your way in the dark—you never know what you're going to strike. I couldn't help you much if I wanted to, and it would spoil all my fun if I did. You're too serious to play with men, I'm afraid; you've made a study of this game as a whist player does, so that you forget that its real object is to amuse."

The easiest of the men that Miss Daintor had met was Mr. Sentinel. She had known him since the first days of her emergence from the chrysalis, when she returned from the West, and, by constantly meeting him at dinners and receptions, she had established a fairly intimate relationship in which she felt confident. She had once said of him that he had no sense of humor, which remark had happened to be true. She never dared use that phrase again, however, though she had heard it often enough at the Carroll-Lewises'. She had first

said it because it sounded clever and was not what Miss Threnstone would call the "obvious thing"—whatever that meant—but they spoke of so many jovial persons at the Carroll-Lewises' as not having "a sense of humor" that she decided that it must have some especial significance, beyond her interpretation. Miss Threnstone, in fact, was fond of saying that Miss Daintor herself had no sense of humor, though the girl's laughter rang prettily at the slightest provocation.

So it was, when Mr. Sentinel began calling on her alone, that Miss Daintor decided she must no longer try to avoid an encounter single-handed with a man. She would essay a flirtation if necessary, and try to feel her way in the dark where no former experience could help her; she must find out for herself what happened when the door shut. If it should turn out to be a genuine love affair, so much the better, for she had her future to consider. Her course in novel reading, on which she had depended not a little, seemed singularly inadequate to teach her how to act, and so she determined to take her cue from Mr. Sentinel's advances. He was a straightforward and plain-minded man who would have made it very easy for the girl to be her own simple and charming self had she been more secure in her position. He went on stolidly with their friendship, taking it for granted that she was just what she seemed, and he manifested such a loyal interest in her welfare that her conscience often troubled her lest it should be wrong not to inform him regarding the place she held. The girl at last compounded with her misgivings by deciding to wait till the affair became more serious. She had learned to think that men's hearts, when broken on the wheel of pride, were easily mended; if, then, he should truly love her, offer himself, and be shocked at her confession that she was not born a lady, there would not be so very much harm done, after all.

It was very early in the game that an accident happened to cause Miss

Daintor serious perturbation. She had watched herself too carefully not to slip the moment that the tension was relaxed in her mind, and so, one day, the first time that Mr. Sentinel's conversation displayed attentions that might be construed as intentions, the excitement of the interview threw her off her guard, and an old habit asserted its reflex action.

"To think that I should have chosen this day, of all days, to betray myself!" she sobbed, to Miss Threnstone, before she went to bed. "I know he noticed it, and he will never come again—*never!*"

"What in the world did you do?" Miss Threnstone said. "Did you say 'Yes, sir?' Western women often do that, you know."

"No!" cried Miss Daintor, "I could have passed that off as a joke. Why, he asked me for a glass of water, and I—I brought it to him—on a *tray!*" and she would not be comforted.

That Mr. Sentinel did not notice the significance of this incident need hardly be said. He remarked it as little as he had failed to recognize the Maid in the Lady when they had first met. He had been a visitor at the house in the old days when Mary had taken the butler's place, waiting on the table Sunday evenings, but he was of that well-bred sort who are absolutely unconscious of the fact that servants have faces. The girl had been especially afraid of meeting him, but Miss Threnstone assured her, very wisely, that Miss Daintor in a Paris evening gown would obliterate all memories of Mary in cap and apron.

As his attentions became more marked several other slips occurred during Miss Daintor's absorption of mind, and they caused her the keenest anguish of mortification. At one time when he was sitting at the table reading she brought him a book and went carefully around to pass it to him at his left hand, as if it were a salad. It seemed to her at that moment that it was all up with her, and that she must be exposed, like a stage adventuress, but he looked up, and said

only, "You *have* beautiful eyes, haven't you?"

That he was on the verge of a proposal Miss Threnstone knew well enough, but, true to her neutrality, she stayed her hand. She would not intervene even to save a sentimental disaster; she would let the drama play itself out. Miss Daintor also felt that the crisis was coming, but by instinct rather than by inference. She began to put him off and gain time, retarding the outcome partly because of her very feminine panic at being sweetly captured, and partly, too, because she dreaded the disclosure that she told herself his offer would necessitate. Mr. Sentinel, however, was too persistent, in his love-making-by-rule way, to be diverted very long, and the girl saw that it was only a question of opportunity with him; the question was boiling within him, obviously, and she knew that the next time they were alone together he would propose to her, explosively. She knew, too, that she would accept him when he offered marriage. And then would come the test of her confession, and, she felt sure, the entrance into a life where she could honestly be her own mistress.

Miss Daintor's only false steps, so far, had been due to absent-mindedness caused by the obsession of her wooing, but the time came at last for her to be tested by the question of the Relative Importance of Things, which Miss Threnstone had assured her was the *crux* of the gentlewoman. She was even given a broad hint by Fate on the morning of the problem which should have saved her.

At ten o'clock she heard the door-bell ring, and after considerable more than the usual delay in answering, it rang again. Some secret sense told her who it was waiting so impatiently, and she stood in suspense in the upper hall, undecided whether to answer the door herself or not, tempted to and from the decision. What would Mr. Sentinel think if she came herself, like a housewife answering the peddler's knock? Would a lady do that? She hesi-

tated just long enough to exhaust the caller's patience, and then, uneasy in her mind as to the proprieties, especially in view of the state of affairs between them, ran downstairs and opened the door. There was no one on the steps, but half-way down the block a gentleman was slowly walking away. It was Mr. Sentinel, and Miss Daintor went upstairs again, to redden her eyes in her own room until lunch was served.

Late in the afternoon there came another ring at the bell, and Miss Daintor, who had learned this one lesson at least, hurried down, flinging her scruples aside. There was something familiar in the face of the man at the door, and something very perplexing in his manner, too, but it was not Mr. Sentinel, whom she had confidently expected to meet there. She had, indeed, been so sure of it that the surprise of seeing a different face dazed her a little, and his words added to her confusion. It was not until after he had gone that she realized that the person she had faced was James, formerly Miss Threnstone's footman, now Mr. Sentinel's man, and that he had been as embarrassed as she. James had been rather desperately in love with her in the old days of their mutual service, and she had put him off with as many pretexts as she used now with his master, though for different reasons.

All these memories came back to her in the intervals of her greater predicament, for James had brought a message from Mr. Sentinel which baffled her judgment again. He had that afternoon met with a serious accident, and had been brought home unconscious. His first words had been a request that Miss Daintor should come to his house to see him immediately, and James had hurried off to find her, and then to other urgent errands.

It was outside her experience, this, and Miss Daintor again hesitated at the proprieties of the case. Yet, surely, the request could not be denied, and, to be fair to her, she longed to see him and do what she could; but it was,

of course, impossible without a chaperon, for many conventional reasons. She dressed in haste and set out at once to find Miss Threnstone, who would undoubtedly accompany her there. But Miss Threnstone had left no word of her whereabouts that afternoon, and there was nothing to do but make the rounds of the most likely places to find her. Miss Daintor took a cab directly to the Whites' and found Miss Threnstone had left there an hour before, and from that place the pursuit led her back and forth across town for two or three hours. She grew more and more excited and nervous as the time was spent, and in that cab she fought out her poor little ignorant fight; the Lady against the Woman. The case seemed clear at first to her mind that had studied the rules but never the exceptions of social usages. She had sworn allegiance to new customs that did not provide for cases like this. Several times she decided to direct the driver to Mr. Sentinel's house. The hand of the little clock in the brougham went up and down the dial with her moods; she had her finger on the electric button more than once, fearing to press the bell, but at last, thinking that Miss Threnstone must surely have returned, she drove home. It was now seven o'clock, and hurrying in, she found Miss Threnstone at the dinner-table with her hat still on her head and her gloves beside her plate.

"Here's a letter that was just left for you," said Miss Threnstone, before Miss Daintor had time to speak; "and did you know Mr. Sentinel has just had a severe accident? He was run over this afternoon. It was thought at first he was quite seriously hurt, but I believe he's out of danger now. I was going to run right over as soon as I had had a bite of dinner. You'll come, too, of course? I didn't know whether you'd be at home to-night or not, and so I wasn't going to wait. By the way, did you know that James is Mr. Sentinel's valet now? I had such a queer little talk with him when he came to bring your letter! There

was certainly something the matter with him besides the accident, but I couldn't make out what."

Miss Daintor by this time was very white. She had opened the letter with the point of a fork and read it, her lower lip trembling as Miss Threnstone talked. When she had torn it into little pieces and tossed them into her plate, she looked up slowly and walked toward the door.

"I think I won't go over to-night," she said.

For some reason or other Miss Daintor left, within a week, on an indefinite visit to the West, and Miss Threnstone, who had again become an amateur invalid, did not continue on terms with society. As she sat alone in the candle light one night after the new departure, she laid down her volume of the "Nightingale" with an abstracted smile.

"There are a few questions I'd like to have answered," she said. "What I'd like to know is, just why the Lady didn't dare to see the Gentleman, and exactly why the Gentleman didn't want to see the Lady. And then there's the question of the Man and the Maid. Did the Man tell the Gentleman that the Maid was not a Lady? Did the Gentleman write to the Lady not to come because he found she was a Maid? Or was it because he had hoped she was neither a Maid nor a Lady, but a true Woman? I strongly suspect that the answer to the whole secret lies with the Man.

"However," said the eccentric Miss Threnstone, as she gave a little yawn, "there's no question about the Change of Environment; that was a Logical Climax. And, of course, there's no question as to the Relative Importance of Things; that's a Question of Caste!"



HER TROUSSEAU

FLOUNCES, frills and furbelows,
Daintiest of *lingerie*;
Hand and foot-wear, gloves and hose,
Trim and stylish as can be.

Jackets, ulsters, opera cloaks,
Mackintoshes, wraps galore;
Hats and bonnets, tams and toques,
Suiting country, sea and shore.

Every changing hour and season
Has its gown appropriate;
Every ribbon has its reason,
Every detail marks a date.

Jewels neck and hands to cumber,
Filmy lace to decorate;
Wedding gifts in endless number,
Priceless china, precious plate.

So Miss Million comes a bride,
Bringing for her dower-part
All that fortune can provide.
Has she—does she bring—a heart?

S. DECATUR SMITH, JR.

A MAD MEDLEY

NOW 'tis March that loudly trumpets near and far,
 And he whirls the aged shanghai off the bough,
 And he quickly gets a focus
 On the bosom of the crocus,

Which he bursts to gaily gild the inner cow.
 The mosquito tunes his sandalwood guitar,
 And the shad roe thumps his ribboned tambourine,
 And the circus poster's shining,
 And the bearded goat is dining
 On the pink pyjamas dimpling on the green.

But on Spring's sounding shore
 March roars the following roar:

"Rip, rap, flip, flap, riot and romp all day,
 Ripping, zipping, slipping along over the meadows gray,
 Wildly scooting, madly tooting out with the ships at play—
 Oh, I'm a surly, burly bully, and out for a big hooray!"

Now the Ethiop is singing full of bliss
 As he wallops on the wall the kalsomine,
 And the fumes of soap and borax
 Nimbly nail us on the thorax,
 And the legend of the pill begins to shine;
 Oh, the organ grinder's slipped his chrysalis,
 And the monkey scampers blithely up the blinds
 For the evanescent copper
 Which 'tis eminently proper
 Should begild the genial grinder as he grinds.

Yet March pipes in the trees
 Such syllables as these:

"Rip, rap, flip, flap, roister and romp all day,
 Jumping, slumping, bumping along over the town and away,
 Grimly growling, harshly howling out with the ships at play—
 Oh, I'm a surly, burly bully, and out for a big hooray!"

Now the lambkin's somersaulting on the slope,
 And the mint upon the sauce begins to beam,
 While the radish and the berry
 Cast a nimbus more than merry
 Round the dainty hocus-pocus of our dream.
 Now Love dallies with the tender bud of hope,
 And the chicken from the egg begins to pop,
 And the flitting moth is sighted
 Round the lamp of Spring, just lighted,
 And the proud Bermuda onion is on top.

Still March, o'er marsh and mere,
 Roars loud and sharp and clear:

"Rip, rap, flip, flap, rumpus and romp all day,
 Clashing, crashing, smashing along, with never the time to stay,
 Madly moaning, grimly groaning out with the ships at play—
 Oh, I'm a surly, burly bully, and out for a big hooray!"

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

THE IMPRESSIONS OF A STAGE HORSE

By Sarah Cooper Hewitt

WHEN my forelegs went so completely that I came down five days in succession on Murray Hill, trying to hold back my share of a heavy, overcrowded 'bus without a break, and broke my knees all to pieces on the slippery asphalt, the stage company promptly sold me for a few dollars to an old ash-man. His daughter, a very pretty little girl, was one of that drove of high kicking, bucking fillies that prance in and show off their different paces at the Opera, stripped of their stable clothes—though why such broken-gaited creatures, with their stocked ankles, are allowed in the show ring I cannot imagine. The man who buys the horses for the Opera stage seemed such a great friend of hers that she got him to take me off her father's hands for a cracking big price. The old man got so drunk on the strength of it that he nearly clubbed and kicked the life out of me before they took me away.

I thought I knew all about stages, but shied with surprise when I found the Opera stage was not a new line of 'buses, but a big wooden platform, for all the world like a coach-house floor without the washstand. It is open in front and looks out on rows and rows of mangers, and back of them little box stalls, built in stories one over the other, just big enough for donkeys or Shetland ponies. Instead, these are kept filled with women who have lost or forgotten their stable hoods and try to cover themselves with bits of shiny brass forehead-bands and glass curb-chains around their necks, with bunches of flowers in their head-stalls and breast-plates. Why they

do not catch pleuro-pneumonia in the draughts I cannot imagine.

I don't dislike my present place, although it is all night-work except for Saturday afternoons. My work is light and the feed good, but I hate the continual glare and noise. If the band played like that on Fifth avenue and the people yelled so loud they would all be run in by the police. I wish I could understand what the whole row is about, but when they keep changing me from the near to the off side, without any apparent reason, saddling or harnessing me with such a lot of different kinds of harness and useless trappings, I can't possibly get the hang of the thing. They give me different riders or drivers every night, sometimes men, sometimes women, who never have the same liveries or stable clothing, which often is nothing but a light linen sheet in zero weather. Besides, they wear such a variety of queer contrivances on their heads to keep off the flies that I am completely puzzled.

There is a thing called "Carmen," where they make ten of us horses go around and around like a circus ring. I have to gallop in ahead of them, ridden by a regular tailor, dead stuck on himself, dressed in a suit of black velvet and brandishing a tremendous gold stable key. I don't see why he keeps spurring me all the time when he wants me to go very slow, and always reins me tight back on a heavy curb bit, unless it's because he's just trying to keep in the saddle. He rolls like a sailor, and is bound to come a bad cropper on his head some night if he doesn't stop bowing to the audience and is not more careful about

turning me sharp around on my game leg on that smooth board floor, which ought to be thickly graveled. After all this monkey business he rides me through a big gate into a fence at the back of the stage, which doesn't do the least good, as there is nothing behind it. There we are made to stamp and clatter our hoofs on the floor before being led back to our stable. In this "Carmen" nearly all of the stage people have striped stable blankets, very badly folded, but instead of wearing them properly, to keep their quarters warm, they carry them over their withers and let them slip down, to get in their own way and trip everybody up. Then they keep talking about the conductor and minding his signals, but I never saw the sign of a conductor or heard the clang of his gong. Except the name of the opera, the nearest approach to a street car I have observed is that rickety big machine covered with colored lights that they drag in with ropes in "The Huguenots." They keep firing guns in the street, which, I thought, is contrary to city ordinance; but I suppose they are a Tammany crowd with the "right pull."

That "Huguenots" is very queer. Sometimes I am led on the stage with a side-saddle and ridden by a very heavy woman, whom everyone calls "La Regina" (what a name!) at the top of their lungs. They say she is a queen, but she's no queen, or she would behave more like a lady, and not kick up such a rumpus squealing about the stage, allowing people to give her so much back talk, besides arguing and fighting among themselves and making a most dreadful noise by imitating the sound of drums. Some nights, when there is a heavy snowstorm and the going is so bad that the stableman who has charge of me won't go out, four men carry this queen on the stage in a miniature brougham, with the body painted with the flashiest sort of colors. It has not a bit of its running gear left; I suppose its wheels and axles got completely smashed in one of those "blocks" outside the stockholders'

entrance, where they don't look out for their live stock and the drivers try to pole each other's carriages, while the police have bets on the show and don't pretend to keep order.

I hate that chorus most of all. It is always in my way, pushing and crowding my legs so that I am afraid I will step on someone and get a licking, even if I do it by accident. I wish they would sell that chorus of girls; they are a perfect nuisance. When they are not making a noise all together they keep whispering and giggling and winking at the men in the audience in the most knowing way. I wonder if they expect them to give them some feed, after the big storm apron is unrolled and let down at the end of the last act.

If only they would let us off from appearing in that grand march in "Faust"! But no matter how loud they sing "Oh, no, we'll never do so any more," they never stick to their word, and it makes me feel positively vicious that, in spite of their solemnly promising this, before witnesses, we are sure to be billed for the same thing next week.

But the noisiest of all is the "Wagner Cycle," though I never could see or hear any signs of wheels about it. They force me on the stage in the charge of different very stout women who are always named *Brünhilda*, which must cause the greatest confusion in giving the stable orders. They call me their "noble courser *Grane*," though there are never any oats about, for I have looked everywhere. Even on the coldest nights these women are always harnessed with tin bridles, saddles and martingales, and are protected by a big tin dashboard, so high that no horse could kick over it, though he might dent it badly. Perhaps they are afraid I may bite them, but they forget the length of my teeth, and I certainly don't feel like trying as long as they feed me lumps of sugar out of their hands when they are not busy neighing and whinnying at the top of their lungs, or pawing the air with their front feet. Why can't they be

more careful with their one-pronged pitchforks? They handle them so like parasols that I am afraid my eyes will be poked out some night. Some of these *Brünhildas* seem a bit touched in their wind, blowing and panting so much that they ought to be condemned as confirmed "roarers." They are overfed, too, and in such bad condition that they can't even trot off the stage at a good, square, level gait. A good "sweat" would clear out their pipes, and if their hay was properly damped before feeding it might help their wind a little and lessen their roaring.

Brünhilda exercises about in a paddock with *Siegfried*, who always has his fur bandages put on his legs wrong (I suppose he is looked after by a green stable hand). He constantly frets and worries about a big brass tie ring which he is afraid of losing. Whenever he is away, *Brünhilda* is followed by a drove of Valkyries, all lined on the outside with tin, like feed pots. I can't make these Valkyries out. Can they represent insects or birds? They buzz and swarm like horse-flies and then gallop through the air hooting like screech owls.

The part of the opera I detest the most is called the "Fire Music." There is no music to speak of, and they do nothing but let off steam and burn red lights. Here *Siegfried* is

stretched on a hurdle with his back broke, and as they can't get him up on his feet again they are obliged to destroy him. *Brünhilda* seizes my bridle and tries to make me go through the fire, but as she cannot help stepping on her stable clothes, which fit very badly and are far too long, she trips and bangs my knees with the tin dashboard. She becomes so much upset and so terribly "done" that finally she is obliged to pull out of the race and let a man lead me away. This makes her desperate, and she commits suicide by jumping into the flames. I suppose that is the reason why they keep so many *Brünhildas* always on hand.

But what is the use of wondering about all these things? Perhaps the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals might explain them, but I don't like to ring for their ambulance, as it would only add to the general noise and confusion, which are about all I can stand. I may find out at the next "benefit," for what is the use of a benefit if nobody gets any good from taking so much trouble? Not the singers, certainly, or they would not grumble about it. Not the audience, which never listens and does nothing but talk and yawn. It must be for the horses, for whom they christen those "off" nights with a stable term. Surely it is but a proper tribute to our interest in the stage.



YOU WHO LOVE ME

YOU whom I love I fain would meet to-day,
 Content to linger at your side, and say
 "Thanks for this meeting," or "The day is bright,"
 And follow after in your busy flight.
 Content? Ah, yes! Nay, all content above
 To be with you—you whom I love.

You who love me I soon shall see to-day,
 And by your side shall loiter, and shall say
 Wan things and chill, the while my eyes plead loud
 To be alone, unspoken midst the crowd.
 And you will sigh and throb and laugh to be
 There by my side—you who love me.

RICHARD STILLMAN POWELL.

A STRING OF BEADS

SHE hath a slender neck,
 And, fain to clasp such whiteness,
 Two strings of beads bedeck
 Its grace with shining brightness.
 Sweetly she sings and low,
 While late the twilight lingers,
 And each bead, falling slow,
 Slips through her jeweled fingers.

My great-great-grandame's face
 Was fair, her years but twenty;
 Hers were exceeding grace
 And sighing lovers plenty.
 The king himself, in time—
 They say he swore it roundly—
 Confessed for her sweet prime
 The love he felt profoundly.

And when in doleful screed
 A swain declared his passion,
 My grandame strung a bead
 In most methodic fashion.
 A bishop's heart is here,
 A viscount's, earl's and, mounting
 A duke's, a king's and near,
 A score of knights' for counting.

She loved them all full well,
 For, late in life's December,
 Each golden bead she'd tell
 And each dear name remember.

Ah, me! Her grandame's face
 Is hers; her years but twenty;
 Hers are exceeding grace
 And sighing lovers plenty,
 Who follow where she leads—
 Hope like a siren singing—
 To add their hearts—poor beads!—
 Unto her grandame's stringing.

S. E. BENET.



A DISCREPANCY

MISS CLINGER—I heard you were at the ball last night. What a pity
 you don't dance!

MISS POPLIN—But I do.

MISS CLINGER—They told me you don't.

AN UNACCOUNTABLE COUNTESS

By Caroline K. Duer

“**M**Y dear,” said Mrs. Selwyn, impressively, “don’t mention it to anybody, but Miranda’s engaged.”

“Is she?” cried Mrs. Selwyn’s old friend, wagging her red wig earnestly. “Really! It’s the Hon. Mr. Fitz-Arthur, of course.”

Mrs. Selwyn admitted that it was the Hon. Mr. Fitz-Arthur, and had a great deal to tell about her anxiety in entrusting her only child’s happiness to an Englishman, to say nothing of her grief at the prospect of that child’s new home being situated so far from her own brownstone habitation.

“But he need not live in England, need he?” said Miss Smiley. “Why can’t they settle here?”

Mrs. Selwyn thought the Prince could hardly bear to lose such a favorite companion. It seemed that Mr. Fitz-Arthur belonged to so prominent a family that the idea of one of them disappearing from English society for any lengthened period was not to be entertained for an instant.

Miss Smiley was abashed. She had not at first understood the full glories of the match her friend’s daughter was making. She had known Miranda when that young lady’s parents were in the wholesale drug business, and it was hard to grasp the fact that she now associated with the high and mighty in her own country, and was about to “contract an alliance” with one of the higher and mightier in another. She murmured that she supposed it wouldn’t do.

“No,” said Mrs. Selwyn. “I must lose her. She is making a splendid match. If she only keeps her health

—but you know poor Selwyn had a wretched constitution. I often told him so. It’s a wonder he lived as long as he did, but I declare, if he had known how persecuted I was going to be with lawyers and lawsuits about the property the moment the breath was out of his body, he’d have made an effort to live longer. The way those relatives of his have behaved to me—but there! I shall say no more. They will hear from me in court!”

Miss Smiley said she didn’t doubt it—she knew her friend’s intrepid spirit—and, Miranda entering the room at this moment, she rose to go, being somewhat in awe of the girl’s bold black eyes and haughty manner.

“Don’t be in a hurry,” said Mrs. Selwyn, the goodness of whose heart was only equaled by the recklessness of her language. “That fool of a butler of mine ought to be in with the tea. Ring the bell, Miranda. I got him from Mrs. Stone, with such a character, my dear! But then, you never know. I’ve missed two of my best tablecloths—he says they went to the wash; I told him if they had they’d be back by this time. He was most impertinent, and wanted to know if I thought *he* had stolen them. ‘When I think so,’ said I, ‘I’ll say so—you go downstairs.’ Did you ever know such goings on? But I believe they all drink.”

“Saunders is the best servant you ever had, mamma,” said Miranda, firmly. “You know he doesn’t drink, and you may remember that the tablecloths were found. I do wish you would not get into such states about nothing.”

Mrs. Selwyn turned as if to give

battle to her daughter—she had a majestic way of turning, not her head only, but the whole upper part of her person as she sat—then, encountering an unmoved and stern expression on Miranda's face, she thought better of it and turned back again to Miss Smiley.

She both loved and feared Miranda, who had a calm temper and an iron will.

Miss Smiley did not love Miranda at all, but she did fear her, and it was very timidly that she proffered her congratulations on the approaching marriage.

"So mamma has told you," said Miranda, hardly taking the pains to conceal her annoyance. "It is not really to be announced until Monday. I hope you will say nothing about it. I suppose everyone guesses it, but I prefer to make it known at my own time and in my own way. We are to be married in two weeks, if you care to know it. Very short engagement, you say? Oh, Mr. Fitz-Arthur and I came to an understanding some time ago, or he would not have come out here now."

"Yes," said Mrs. Selwyn, pouring the tea, which the abused Saunders had brought in. "Fitz-Arthur admired Miranda very much when we were in London, and his father, Lord Penton—the Earl of Penton, you know—had himself introduced to me at once. A fine-looking man. Such vitality for his years! I wish poor Selwyn had had such a constitution. There's nothing like health! I never had a day's illness in my life, except when Miranda was born, and my mother was as strong as I am. I said to Fitz-Arthur, only the other day: 'Now I give you my daughter a perfect specimen of health; but take care of her, for she inherits her father's constitution.' But, my dear, these young men! What do they care for what an old woman says to them? I don't suppose he will take care of her. Englishmen always—"

But here Miranda interrupted.

"Suppose you send Miss Smiley home in the carriage if she has fin-

ished her tea," she said. "The horses have been stamping about outside for an age, and you have still to dress if you are going to that musical at all this afternoon."

"Have they been waiting long? Dear me! I don't know how it is I always contrive to be so late for everything. You'll go home in the carriage, Miss Smiley, while I get my bonnet on."

And Mrs. Selwyn swept from the room, while poor Miss Smiley, her feeble protests set aside by Miranda, was shut into the large brown chariot that waited at the door, and rattled off to her home, vainly searching in her pocket for money which she would not have spent on a cab, that she might bestow it upon her powerful friend's overpowering servants.

Miranda followed her mother upstairs.

"I had to get rid of her," she said, "because I must talk to you a little before Alan comes, and he will be here presently. We can't live in London for what you propose to give us, mamma. At least, we can't live properly."

Mrs. Selwyn, who was standing before the glass tying the magenta velvet strings of her most expensive bonnet, flushed a deep red and turned round angrily.

"I think you are out of your senses, Miranda," she exclaimed. "If your father and I had had fifteen thousand a year to begin on—but there, I am an old fool to expect gratitude from anyone, even my own child! Do you know what it costs me to keep up this house and the place in the country? Why, cheated as I am by all my tradespeople and every one of the servants, and robbed right and left of the very property your poor father left me, it is a wonder I can give you as much as I do."

"You would not miss double the amount," said Miranda, calmly; "and how can you bear to send me into society in England without the means of doing myself and you credit? When you come over to see us you will be sorry that you were not more generous."

"Well, of course, if I were going to make my home with you it would be different," admitted Mrs. Selwyn, "but to keep two or three places going here and there—really, Miranda, you are just as bad as all the rest of them. You want me to give—give—give all the time."

"How can you say so, mamma?" Miranda looked both haughty and offended; "you really hurt my feelings very much. Haven't I been a pleasure and a pride to you always, and aren't you delighted with the match I'm making? You know that you will make your home with me whenever you are in England, and I should think you would be glad to spend your money for the credit of papa's name."

"It's the Fitz-Arthur name that will get the credit of Selwyn's money. Don't talk to me, my dear. When it comes to what English pockets will swallow I could tell a tale! What is Lord Penton going to give his son? Not the half of what I am giving my daughter!"

"That is not his fault, mamma. You know he is not rich—you knew it before. And Alan is a younger son. What could you expect?"

"I didn't expect to have my own flesh and blood turn against the mother who is ready to give her the clothes off her back!" cried Mrs. Selwyn, almost in tears.

Miranda glanced at her parent's dress, which, though rich in material, was startling in pattern and not very tidy, and shuddered.

"You know you do not mean what you say," she said. "I am *not* turning against you, and you are *not* ready to give me the clothes off your back just yet, it seems—or, rather, enough money to provide many clothes for mine in the future. I suppose it is selfish in me to think of it, but I feel as if I should miss so much the things to which I have been accustomed. There! The carriage has come back. You ought to be going. I suppose I shall not be able to keep a carriage."

"Yes, you will, Miranda," cried Mrs. Selwyn, her kind heart wrung

by the thought of her handsome daughter trudging along the streets of London, while high, proud ladies rolled by in their barouches. "You shall have a carriage that will match the best owned by any duchess among them. There! I must spare you another ten thousand a year for the present, I suppose. I'll have to stop a couple of lawsuits, though, to do it. And your husband will have something, and that ought to do to begin with. By-and-by I'll be dead, and you'll have it all."

"Don't talk of that, mamma," and Miranda kissed her mother affectionately. "You will live a long time and come to see me every year. Alan will insist upon it."

Then Mrs. Selwyn went to her musical, and Miranda went downstairs to receive Mr. Fitz-Arthur.

The engagement was announced in a few days, and everybody appeared immensely pleased.

Mrs. Selwyn delighted in pointing out her handsome son-in-law-to-be to those who did not know him, and in recalling again and again to the memories of those who did, how old and distinguished was his family, and how intimate he had always been with the "dear Prince."

The Hon. Mr. Fitz-Arthur said his mother-in-law was a dear old woman, and had lots of character.

Miranda's eyes seemed blacker and her manner haughtier than ever. She was rather thankful that, of all her future relations, only a brother and sister of Alan's came over for the wedding, but she was careful not to say so, and Mrs. Selwyn took them into her home and her heart, and made them welcome to the best that she had.

Saunders became so exalted after Lord Times had alluded to him as a "deuced good butler," that he might have stolen the tablecloths every week and never been called to account.

Finally the wedding took place, the bride and groom sailed for England, and Lord Times and his sister reluctantly departed to make a tour through the States. They had really grown

very fond of Mrs. Selwyn during their visit, and tried to persuade her to accompany them, but she said she must rest and recover after all the excitement, and so they went, and she was left alone.

She did not mind it so much at first. All the servants had to be dismissed and new ones procured, whose vices it took a week or two to discover.

She gave one dance and two musicals and a great many dinners, went to the Opera three times a week, and otherwise entertained herself and society at large during the Winter.

She did not go to London in the Spring, though she declared that Miranda had warmly pressed her to do so. She went to the country instead, and made Miss Smiley come and pay her a long visit. Miss Smiley loved visiting, and cocked her red wig more jauntily than ever when she received the invitation.

But though Mrs. Selwyn kept a brave front to the world she was really very lonely. People came and stayed with her, but she said they only used her house for a hotel, and she saw very little of them. She was very fond of and very good to all the young girls of her acquaintance, but she missed her daughter. Miranda didn't write very often, and when she did write it was generally because she wanted something. And as time went on she wanted more and more, but she never appeared to want her mother.

At the end of a year a boy was born to the Fitz-Arthurs, and Mrs. Selwyn, very proud of being a grandmother, decided upon going to England to see Miranda. Those visits of hers that Alan was to have insisted upon had not even been suggested, and that home that she was to make with her daughter had not been made, but she never doubted her welcome. It was, consequently, a great blow to her on her arrival in London to feel her own exuberant warmth of manner chilled by Miranda's coldness and to find that she was expected to take herself and her belongings to a hotel and not to her daughter's house.

Miranda drove her to the hotel in that carriage that was to equal the duchess's best, and left her for the night, promising, however, to return early the next day.

Poor Mrs. Selwyn! She had expected to be met with open arms and to be driven to the house that she had given her daughter, to be welcomed by her son-in-law, to be allowed to see her grandson at once—and here she was sitting down to a lonely dinner in a half-empty hotel dining-room! No wonder that she could not eat, that she found she had a very bad headache and that she scolded her maid violently when that much abused young woman dragged a hairpin too roughly from its place while taking off her hair for the night.

Things were a little better the next day. Miranda came to fetch her mother and the two ladies lunched together in Mrs. Fitz-Arthur's pretty dining-room, and Mrs. Selwyn was taken all over the house and told of all the things that were still lacking in its comfort, and finally introduced to the baby and encouraged to make him a handsome present. The Hon. Mr. Fitz-Arthur did not appear.

"I suppose he's off somewhere with the Prince," said Mrs. Selwyn, hopefully. "No? Well, I hope he means to pay his respects to me very soon. I've done a great deal for him and for his family, as you know. I hope he doesn't mean to hold aloof from me."

"Now, mamma," interposed Miranda, "please don't be ridiculous. Alan has gone to see his father. Lord Penton goes to Paris to-morrow."

"Paris, indeed! These old men, my dear! Don't tell me! Monte Carlo, too, no doubt, running after women and losing his money. I know how men behave, my dear. The older they are the worse they are. I could tell you something about them!"

"Not about Lord Penton, mamma. He is the most quiet, stay-at-home man in the world. He is only going away for his health."

"For his health! Why, a more

vigorous looking old man I never saw. What has he been doing with himself since then? Health, indeed! I don't believe a word of it."

"He had the influenza very badly a short time ago, and it left him rather seedy; before that he was awfully fit."

"I'm sorry he's going," said Mrs. Selwyn. "I rather wanted to consult him about a mine I think he owns some shares in."

"I don't think he could advise you, mamma. He never talks business with women. At any rate, I am afraid you will hardly see him before he goes."

"Aren't you going to see him—your own father-in-law? I might go with you. It isn't as if his wife were alive."

"I think it would hardly do, mamma, to force yourself upon Lord Penton's privacy simply because you want advice about investments," said Miranda, coldly.

She was not very anxious to throw her mother into the society of Lord Penton and his family until some of that lady's most startling eccentricities of dress and manner had been slightly toned down. She was rather afraid of her father-in-law, who, she felt, was fully alive to her own weaknesses.

"Force myself on anyone is what I never did and never shall do, Miranda," cried Mrs. Selwyn, greatly incensed. "If you'll be kind enough to order the carriage, or send that impudent young grinning jackanapes of a footman of yours to get a cab for me, I'll go back to the hotel. I'm quite upset by the way you've talked to me."

Miranda hastened to apologize, but Mrs. Selwyn insisted upon departure, leaving her daughter in some anxiety as to whether she had not jeopardized the arrival of a grand piano, a new carpet, curtains, and a sofa for the drawing-room, to say nothing of the baby's present, by her ill-advised attempts to keep her mother's kindly vulgarities from her father-in-law's aristocratic eyes.

Mrs. Selwyn went back to the hotel in great anger. Here was her own child as good as saying outright that she did not want her mother to intrude upon the family into which that mother's money had enabled her to marry.

"If she's ashamed of me," said Mrs. Selwyn, wiping her eyes, "I'm ashamed of her." But she was a forgiving old lady, and when a note came from Miranda asking her to go to the Opera the next evening she put on her most gorgeous old white brocade covered with roses as big as cabbages, and went. She also had all her jewelry on—emeralds, diamonds and turquoises in the utmost splendor and confusion.

"Dear mamma," cried Miranda (the piano had arrived that afternoon, and the man had come to measure the curtains), "how grand you are! Only you have on a great many colors, and this is not the first time that you have worn that dress. Your maid really ought to have put in new sleeves."

Mrs. Selwyn could have pointed out half a dozen duchesses snuffier than herself, but she hoped, perhaps, that Miranda was taking an interest in her, so, though she felt somewhat mortified, she was not angry, and only said:

"I wish you would come and scold the lazy little hussy. She doesn't care any more what I say to her. Maids really are the most thievish, immoral, good-for-nothing set. I can tell you a story—"

But here Mr. Fitz-Arthur came in, and Mrs. Selwyn's confidences went no farther.

He was polite but rather indifferent as a son-in-law, and after he had shaken hands he seated himself in the back of the box and made it quite evident that he didn't mean to talk.

A great many distinguished people were in the house that night, and not a few of them came to Mrs. Fitz-Arthur's box, for she was handsome and clever, and very much the fashion. Mrs. Selwyn heard scraps of their conversation. It appeared that the

Prince was going to dine at her daughter's house the following week. Now Mrs. Selwyn longed to meet the Prince.

All the next week she hoped against hope that her daughter would ask her to meet him. She knew, of course, that a list of the guests had to be submitted to His Royal Highness, but when she was convinced that her name was not among them, she saw no reason why she should not be included in those few who were invited to the small musical which followed the dinner. At last she broached the subject to Miranda.

"You would hardly enjoy it, mamma. There will be very few older people. I am asking only the Prince's set, and not many of them."

"Well, I can't see that it would hurt them to have your mother present. I don't expect to come to the dinner now, but I really think it will look very odd if you don't have your own mother at the musical," cried Mrs. Selwyn.

"Half of the people don't know that I have a mother and the other half have forgotten it," said Miranda. "Indeed, you wouldn't enjoy it. They won't be polite to you—but come, of course, if you like."

"I went to a lot of the best people when we were here before," exclaimed Mrs. Selwyn, angrily.

"And so did I," returned Miranda, "but we went as outsiders. Now I am one of them and you are not. I know how they feel about outsiders. But, as I said before, come if you like."

Mrs. Selwyn's anxiety to be in the same room with the Prince almost induced her to avail herself of this grudging permission, but when Miranda added, "Only don't blame me if you find yourself uncomfortable and out of place," her resentment became too strong to be subdued, and she exclaimed, passionately:

"You needn't be afraid. I wouldn't come now if you asked me on your bended knees; and that's the way you'll have to ask me for anything you and Fitz-Arthur want in the future.

Good-bye, Miranda; if you ever have a daughter, I hope she'll be better to you than you have been to me."

And she walked out of the room and shut the door.

The next day she had her trunks packed and departed, shaking the dust of London from her feet. She did not care to return to America after so short a stay, for she felt that people would divine how poor a welcome she had received. She went to Paris instead, and finding herself rather bored there, transferred herself and her maid and her trunks to the Reservoir Hotel at Versailles.

She possessed what is known as a "presence" and carried herself with so much majesty that all the other inhabitants of the hotel took her for a dowager English duchess at least, which soothed her ruffled feelings and made her resolve to stay several days longer than she had at first intended.

One morning, as she was returning from a visit to the Trianon, she was accosted, as she crossed the entrance hall, by the manager, who begged, with many smiles and courteous gestures, that the so amiable English duchess would tell him if she knew anything in her own land of a very excellent Milor Penton, who had arrived at the hotel late the preceding night and had suddenly been taken alarmingly ill.

Mrs. Selwyn, in intrepid French, inquired the number of the English milor's room, and was mounting the stairs to it before the manager could recover from his astonishment. He was comforted, however. Evidently the English duchess, who chose to call herself simply Madame, *did* know the English milor.

Mrs. Selwyn knocked at the door of the room, and it was opened by Lord Penton's valet. The poor man was frightened to death about his master, who was, in truth, quite out of his head and raving in the first stages of pneumonia. Mrs. Selwyn began to bully at once. Had he sent for a doctor and nurse from Paris? Of course not! She might have known

it. Here, go downstairs and ask the manager who was the most distinguished doctor in France, and send for him at once. She would write a message to the manager. Perhaps, while they waited for the *best*, there might be some sort of a doctor in Versailles.

In a few minutes she had established a sort of bustling supremacy over the affairs of both the master and the man.

She was an excellent sick-nurse, and she meant to nurse Lord Penton, whether it was strictly her business or not. The dangerous condition of the poor old gentleman and the helplessness of his servant touched her kind heart, and there was nothing she did not do for them. A doctor came and a nurse was sent for, but until that nurse arrived Mrs. Selwyn sat up night and day. She never was tired. She always knew what was to be done, and she never scrupled to tell other people what to do.

When, after weeks of anxiety, the doctor pronounced the patient a little better, he openly avowed that it was as much owing to Mrs. Selwyn's care as to his own skill.

When Lord Penton was first taken ill Mrs. Selwyn had telegraphed to his eldest son to come to him, but the telegram had never reached Lord Times, who was off on a cruise with a friend; and when Lord Penton's reason returned to him he declared himself quite satisfied to remain in such very excellent hands, and begged her not to send for his daughters. He was not a rich man, and their joining him would have added not a little to his expenses, but this he naturally kept to himself.

Mrs. Selwyn amused him very much; her kind heart and her eccentricities, her good actions and her violent modes of expression were most stimulating to his interest.

When he got well enough to lie on the sofa in his room she used to come and sit in the window beside him and give him the benefit of her judgment upon the world at large and Versailles in particular. The pictures in

the great galleries were such as would have pleased the taste of the late Mr. Selwyn, she was sure. She herself only felt that most of the ladies were no better than they should be. "Talk of immorality, my dear," she would say, hands and eyes raised to heaven in protest, "when it comes to exhibiting the pictures of the creatures and their apartments! And the amount of money it costs you to see them, too! A fee here for the gallery, and another there for the ballroom, and something for the man who shows you Marie Antoinette's apartments—that's a very curious corner where the looking-glass reflects you without your head—a franc to go down the secret staircase, and another to walk round Mme. de Maintenon's bed! And those Trianons, and the stable with state coaches, and the park, and the fountains! I declare I'm nearly ruined! and I always get everywhere so late that I hardly have the benefit of my money before they shut the place up. But I'm glad I've seen it. Selwyn always said that traveling and sight-seeing are very broadening to the mind. Poor Selwyn! I could never have pulled him through such an illness as you have had."

"If kindness and good nursing could have done it you would certainly have managed it, my dear lady," said Lord Penton, gallantly.

"But look at your constitution; that's what saved you, and that's what Selwyn never had. Sometimes I'm afraid that Miranda takes after him. I warned Fitz-Arthur when he married her to be very careful of her, but I didn't think she looked at all well in London. She didn't behave just like herself, either."

"When were you in London?" asked Lord Penton. "I did not know you were expected."

"Well, I don't know that I was expected," returned Mrs. Selwyn, "and, judging from my reception, I think I wasn't much wanted, either; but I meant to see my grandson, and I came. Miranda's a good girl, of course, but sometimes she forgets what's due to her mother, and that's

what Selwyn would never have permitted if he had been alive."

"I trust," said Lord Penton, gravely, "that Alan has never been in any way lacking in consideration for you. It would be the height of ingratitude."

"Oh, I've no fault to find with either of them. They are just like all the young people of the day, I suppose, only I don't understand them. They are swells, and I am not. As Miranda said, I'm an 'outsider.' That was when she didn't want me to come to her musical to meet the Prince. Do you see anything in me that's too ridiculous to meet the Prince, Lord Penton?"

"Indeed, I do not, Mrs. Selwyn," returned Lord Penton. "I should consider him honored, as I am, by your acquaintance. I can't imagine what Miranda was thinking of."

"Well, I was angry enough at the time," said Mrs. Selwyn, "but I'm not now. Though I do think that it was a pity that I had to miss such an opportunity. Of course, I would not go when she said that, and I remember being pretty outspoken about it, which is contrary to my usual habit. I'm afraid she's angry with me now, for I have had no answer to my last letter, and I sent her a check in it, too, just to show there was no ill-feeling. I may have a bad temper, but I can't keep on being angry with my

only child. She's all I have got in the world."

Mrs. Selwyn wiped her eyes stealthily and looked out of the window.

Lord Penton sat upright on the sofa.

"I am an old man, Mrs. Selwyn," he said, "and I have very little to offer you, but if you want someone to take care of you, someone who has a warm affection for you, you can't do better than to take me."

"Penton!" gasped Mrs. Selwyn; "you don't mean it? Why, Miranda was so afraid you'd be shocked by me that she didn't want us to meet again after she was married."

"Hang Miranda!" cried Lord Penton. "Will you marry me?"

A few days after, the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-Arthur arrived in breathless haste at Versailles in answer to a telegram.

Mrs. Selwyn met her daughter at the door.

"There are a great many things you may say to me, Miranda," she said, guiltily, "for when I am Lady Penton I sha'n't really be one of you, any more than I am now. But you can't ever say *then* that I shall 'intrude on Lord Penton's privacy,' and I must tell you that the *Prince* has written to congratulate him, and His Royal Highness hopes that we will join him at Homburg as soon as we are married."



TOO MUCH

CASTLETON—Willie, do you ever look through the keyhole when I am in the parlor with your sister?

WILLIE—No, sir. There are some things that no man can stand!



AN INGRESS

"NO, sir; the Rev. Mr. Spicer has never seen a play."

"Why is he preaching so vigorously against the stage, then?"

"He is in hopes that his congregation will send him on a tour of investigation."

WHERE IT SEEMED ALWAYS AFTERNOON

By Charles Frederic Nirdlinger

“WHAT in the world does she see in him?”

The phrase falls quite unurged from my pen; it is the most vivid impression of my recent days. I have heard it at every turn—whispered behind fans in the drawing-room, grumbled between cigar puffs in the smoking-room, laughed quizzically as I walked down the aisle in the theatre, snarled by my enemies—who, in desperation, broadened the query to include the infernal regions—and asked amazedly by my dearest friends: “What in the world does she see in him?”

For the most part, I fancy, the question had been answered by another: “Who could ever account for Claudia’s caprices?” Indeed, that was my own reply to a charming woman who asked me, with a rather forced yawn, for an explanation of the marvel. Claudia herself fell back on the formula when, in a burst of love’s misgiving, I sought to learn the texture of her fancy that wove my poor deserts into grace and favor. “Who could ever account for Claudia’s caprices?” she said, more in mischief than in slight. That, too, was the reply I chanced to overhear more than once, and I presume it fairly represents the general notion of the surprise.

To be dismissed as a woman’s caprice, even though it be Claudia’s, was not flattering, perhaps, to one’s sense of importance; but since when was love to be reasoned down by pride? Besides, women have great respect for their caprices.

Then, too, vanity found solace in the recollection that the favor of

beauty invariably subjects a man to the same flout that attended every comment on the chance that gives to me—poor me—the glorious Claudia, the idol of the season, whose talent poesy celebrates in sonnets sincere, if a trifle asthmatic; whose features genius limns in eager colors; whose dulcet voice routs rivals’ intrigue and tunes the buzz of criticism to rhapsody—that Claudia, for whose hand a prince of the East would have resigned the throne of a hundred rajahs!

Perhaps, after all, the wonder of the town is not unreasonable.

Still, even if the circumstances were wholly different than they are—were I rich, famous, an Apollo, armed with all the arts that catch the fair—yet would envy, malice and friendship ask the same question: “What in the world does she see in him?”

His own favor in a woman’s eyes a man is never at a loss to understand, be he ugly as Silenus, ribald as Ther-sites, surly as Charon. But when Venus knocks at another’s door! That, to him, defies all reason, save woman’s reason; which he will beg you to admit is no reason. For the goddess to loose her girdle at his neighbor’s threshold and to pass by Brown’s, and Jones’s, and Smith’s, and—and—his own—all, too, on the same side of the street, as it were—here, waiter, another round! He and Brown and Jones and Smith have yet to ponder how long the thing will last.

It is a great comfort when regarding the good fortune of others to keep in mind the mutability of human affairs. Somehow, it is like making sure that the Commandeur has a com-

fortable and conspicuous seat at the banquet to which you have not been invited. And nowhere does this kind of solace avail so much as when one is forced to view, a mere spectator, the love-play of others. What a comfort, then, to rake over the cindery proverbs that tell of fancy's fickleness and how every passion carries its own snuffer! That group we just left discussing the visit of Venus to their louty neighbor, you have no idea how cheery they grew with mere repeating of the saws and jingles that foretold his speedy exit from paradise.

"All the world loves a lover"—except when he's lucky. Shakespeare often sacrifices truth to rhetoric's cheapest trick.

It was in the moment of her proudest triumph that I sought Claudia to hazard my fate. How little master of himself a man must be to put a woman to the test of choice at such a time! She had sung "*Manon Lescaut*" that night as she had never sung before. The rich complexion of her voice—a ruby in warmth, an opal in varied and elusive color—painted the very soul and temper of the artless wanton. In look and manner, she might have stepped straight from the vellum of the abbé's romance. No figure more exquisite and winsome smiles from the ivory panels of *Sieur Latour*.

The audience, enwrapped by the charm of her voice, the witchery of her spirit, let the green baize fall in the silence of utter admiration. Then, as the curtain screened the entrance, sense of the occasion returned and clamor of approbation recalled the singer again and again. Amid a veritable shower of roses and violets and orchids Claudia stood, a figure of incarnate joy, radiant with splendid achievement. And like unto a queen in her unconscious confidence. She had greatly desired this quality of success in a rôle wherein she read only the poesy of love's travail—had striven and prayed for it—but I doubt that the event surprised her. "I shall never fail," she had once said to me; "I cannot fail. My stars forbid

it." And she said it quite simply, with the trust of superstition.

When I reached the stage I saw her in the customary court of compliment and adulation. She nodded to me but formally, indifferently, so that I was about to retrace my steps. Just then, memory, piqued by the scene and all the circumstance, recalled the wooing of that audacious youth who won the famous *Mlle. Clairon* against all the wit and gold and garters of Paris.

It was in the foyer of the *Comédie Française*, you will remember, after that scene in "*The Cid*" where *Chimene* spurs the *Campeador* to slay *Don Sanche*. Courtiers, soldiers, scholars crowded from the boxes to salaam before the actress, who came into the foyer, as was the custom then, to receive their homage. *Voltaire*, *Watteau*, young *Richelieu*, *Maurepas*, *Beaumarchais*, *Rameau*, *de Stainville*—the flower of France—stood about her in jealous hedge. Suddenly, as if by a whirlwind, they were hurled aside. At the feet of *Mlle. Clairon* knelt a figure, breathless, shabby, but resolved. He told her, quickly, many things, that he was a poet, and poor, and sick with love of her, and that he must die if she turned from him. Still suppliant before her, with all that company stunned by his daring, he told her three times—I recalled even such details of the story; three times he said: "I love you! I love you! I love you!" Probably he would have said it a fourth time if rough hands had not laid hold of him to drag him away for a madman.

But *Mlle. Clairon* would not have it so. "Let him be," she ordered; "he's a brave fellow. He loves a woman, and he makes a way to tell her so." And when the play was over she took him home to supper.

Suppose one were to—Bah! all that happened in the days of patches and rice-powder and odes to ladies' eyebrows. To-night, here, on the stage of the Opera, with Claudia hedged by these modish puff-balls, that poet's fantastic caper would end very differently. Instead of wedding

chimes in the Rue d'Anjou, can't you hear the clang of the patrol dashing up Broadway? I'd better be off.

But I saw Claudia draw aside slightly while Telka put a great cloak of silver fox over her shoulders. I caught the sound of my name almost whispered to the maid, and Claudia's glance—whether inviting or forbidding I cared not—lighted on me for an instant. Quickly I advanced and asked if I might come to see her to-morrow—I had something to say to her.

"To-morrow?" she repeated. "I have engagements for all the day, to-morrow."

Humph! Do you think your poet of the foyer would have persisted after that? I wondered if I had begun wrongly; if Claudia resented my neglect to add another voice to the *Io, Triumphe!* But it has always seemed to me an impertinence to tell a true artist that you approve—you who can do nothing more than admire. An impertinence because, suppose you did not approve—what then? Besides, such a woman as Claudia—as I fancied I knew her—cares little or nothing for compliment and flattery. Indeed, few women do—save the foolish ones; and they are rarely worth pleasing.

Yes, yes, you can doubtless marshal a phalanx of nimble-footed proverbs against that sentiment, a whole army of old campaigners, in verse and prose; but most of them were writ by attic hermits, fellows who knew the sex only by hearsay, or from consorting with quotation books, or chucking a waitress under the chin.

They've set a lot of nonsense afloat in the world, with their rhymes and their distichs. The woman really to be desired is content with the plain truth—if it be well put.

Still, it might have been as well to approach Claudia with some echo of the applause that yet buzzed and hummed in the corridors and at the porte-cochère. I was on the point of repairing the omission when she said again that she could not receive me

on the morrow, that my message must wait.

"But what I have to say is important," I insisted; "very important—to me."

"Then why not say it now, Monsieur?"

"Monsieur!" And I had an avowal on my lips! Come to think of it, though, Mlle. Clairon said Monsieur to that poet in the foyer, for all her taking him home to supper afterward.

"You make me curious, Monsieur," Claudia went on. "What have you to say? I want to hear it now, *tout-de-suite.*"

"If I could believe, if I dared believe, that you really are impatient to——"

"Impatient! I am always that," she interrupted. "In Paris, you should know, they call me 'Mlle. Tout-de-Suite'—because everything must be done right away. Are we ready, Telka?"

The maid was fastening the last hook in her mistress's mantle. An attendant signaled to Telka that the carriage was at the door. Mrs. Edgerton, who was giving a ball that night in Claudia's honor, glared at me from a sympathizing group half-way across the stage, in reproach for the delay I was causing.

"We are waiting for you," she called, vexedly, to Claudia, who started as if to leave me.

"One minute only," I entreated, barring the way, and quite reckless of the wonder with which Mrs. Edgerton and her companions regarded me—for all I cared, they might have been that group in the foyer of the *Comédie Française*. "What I have to say to you, Claudia, is that I love you——"

"But I knew that," she interrupted, quickly; "knew it long ago. Is that all, Monsieur?"

"No, no; not half, nor quarter, nor any part of how much I love you."

"Yes, Monsieur"—again that word to freeze my heart!—"and I, too, love you."

The candor and simplicity with

which the beauteous creature spoke made me doubt that I had heard aright. Claudia must have divined my incredulity, for she said, quite as calmly as before:

"But you must have known it long ago, didn't you?" And now her dear eyes looked into mine with a sweet meaning beyond mistaking, and the blood in her veins, tinting her cheeks like unto the pomegranate, told me even more than her words.

"You love me, rarest of women?" I stammered; "and you will marry me?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," she answered. "Everything shall be as you wish, always, Monsieur."

"Monsieur" had no terrors for me now. In another moment Claudia would have been in my arms. Only the frosty voice of Mrs. Edgerton, observing to her companions that "some persons never know when they're through," recalled the place and circumstances. Her patience exhausted—she never knew how near she came to giving a ball in someone's honor without the presence of the essential figure—she marched across the stage, with every show of carrying off her guest by force, if need be.

"Yes, yes; I'm coming," Claudia reassured her, and then, noting that the great lady quite overlooked my presence, she added, with not the faintest play at surprise:

"Don't you know Monsieur Ferrar—my fiancé?"

Mrs. Edgerton divided an incredulous glance between us. The part that went to Claudia—for whom the great lady had some plans of her own—said, clearly enough: "Well, I think this is rather a poor sort of a joke!"

But aloud she ventured only: "Really?" Uttered, though, with almost professional ingenuity of inflection, it compassed my presence in a way to token in that one word the speaker's opinion of my identity; feinting at me, at first, with the kindly grave, then taking me off my guard with the disdainful circumflex, and

rushing in, finally, when the survey of my presence was completed, with the crushing acute. It was a master feat in graphic intonation, and it perched instantly in a secure niche of memory.

I wondered whether Claudia had caught the intention of Mrs. Edgerton's terse comment. In the smile and hand-clasp with which she bade me good-night at the brougham there was nothing but unquestioning happiness and pride. And yet, afterward, long afterward, she reminded me of the word and the way of its speaking.

Possibly something that was said in the drive to Mrs. Edgerton's may have impressed it on her. For, as the carriage-door closed, I fancied I heard her companion ask:

"My dear child, what in the world do you see in him?"

Such was the wooing of the incomparable Claudia.

Strange beyond reason, you may call it, and odd beyond belief; but rare, too, was she whom these fragments silhouette.

Some creatures Nature fashions in fantasy so complex, in humor so happy, in conditions so defiant of rule, that she herself misses the secret and must forego repetition. In the isle of Idumea, in the Southern Seas, there is a bird of paradise, with body plumage of cerulean blue, wings of burnished gold, and white, feathery crest that glistens like a spray of brilliants. Elsewhere there may exist its equal in splendid color; but to this bird of Idumea, alone of all its kind, wherever they may be, has been given tuneful song—a voice as liquid as the lark's and rhythmic as the nightingale's. So that it soars in solitary state above all its raucous species in the records of ornithology. In Madagascar, travelers tell, there grows in the depths of a dank forest an orchid unlike any of its myriad freakish species. Shaped like a lantern and pendent from its stalk, it glows with the greenish lustre of a hundred fireflies in the swamp-mists where it flour-

ishes. And so jealously does this orchid hold itself unique, that the fulgent gossamer wilts into shapeless nothing if taken from its retreat.

Such singularities Nature will mould out of a few feathers, to startle the skies of an islet; and from some filmy tissues, to illumine a murky fen. What may she not do when she turns her wits to femininity, for the confusion of rule and men?

From the readiness with which that "Monsieur" came to Claudia's lips, you have probably presumed her to be of French origin. Or, from the frankness of her temper, of Italian or Spanish or some other meridional nativity. If these fragments were fictional instead of being mere transcripts of reality, it would be matter-of-course to place her beginning in one of those lands that convention peoples with temperament and talent. Or else the quill, moved by the clarity of Claudia's voice, would wing its way northward and never alight until it reached a village of the fjords, where the fishermen draw their nets in rhythm with a grand-opera chorus. Imagination thinks nothing of such a journey, nor of the southern flight; and at the end it finds a region where the genius it creates seems not only natural but inevitable.

But Nature was in the humor of surprise when she fashioned Claudia, just as when she put a lyre in the throat of that bird of paradise in Idu-mea, and when she spangled phosphorescence on that Madagascan orchid. Why, in pursuit of this larkish mood, she elected to walk along the tow-path of a particularly lazy canal that loafed through a scraggy hamlet in Indiana, must, of course, forever remain a secret in Nature's own bosom. A river, almost as lazy and as muddy, skirted the other side of the village; but Nature chose the canal. And she idled along until, from the top of a knoll on the tow-path, she saw what seemed the grayest and sorriest little farm in all the prairie's stretch of gray and sorry little farms. Out of a corner of the close stared a plain wooden house, so stubbornly plain that it re-

fused lintels or jambs to the windows and doors. Square it was, too; so scrupulously square that it seemed as if those who dwelt within must do nothing all their lives but measure things—lengths of furrows, breadths of ditches, heights of stalks and circling hours and days of toil.

"The very place!" cried Nature, caught by the squareness of the house. "I couldn't ask better for my surprise."

Then—such are her prodigies—she summoned there, to the edge of that most uncongenial canal, the Muses of Song, of Poesy and of Dance. She led them to a rude cradle, in that plain, square house and bade them breathe the rarest spirit of their arts upon the child of the soil-delvers. The Graces next she conjured—it needed magic even of Nature to beguile them to that Indiana prairie—and they took the child to sisterhood. Cupid, to complete the marvel, kissed the babe's lips so lovingly that he left there the impress of his own bow.

Such was the origin of the incomparable Claudia. But fancy all that happening in these prosaic times, on the edge of a prairie canal!

I have been told that odds were offered that Claudia would come to her senses—that is how my friends expressed it—when the altar loomed into near view; that she would not hamper her career by the step that has so often led to professional disaster.

But married we were—in Paris. It was one of Claudia's caprices. She said that all pleasant things, like weddings, ought always to happen in Paris. She had resolved, even in childhood, in the square house on the prairie, that when she married it should be there. And during the years of study in the French capital she had selected the very scene of the ceremony—a little chapel in the Rue de la Tremoille, around the corner from her lodgings.

She kept us waiting an hour, and blamed me for it—I had misstated the time, she said.

"If she'd taken my advice," her mamma was good enough to add, "she wouldn't have come at all. She's just ruining her career. After all the care and worry and privation I've been to to make her a success—to go and marry!"

I shall have trouble with Claudia's mamma; I saw that clearly.

And with Claudia's maid, too. (I never liked that Swedish woman, with her glacial voice and her Nibelung code of morals.)

"Madame la mère is right," she mumbled. "Monsieur weel forgive—but for the artiste to gat married—it is always grat meestak."

Long afterward Claudia reminded me of Telka's prophecy, just as she did of Mrs. Edgerton's elaborate "Really?"

"You do not hesitate or regret?" I whispered to her as we walked up the aisle.

"Would I have come?" she asked for reply.

What a picture she was—in her gown of white silk, with full bridal

veil and, my! how many orange blossoms! Rather startling attire, of course, for such a wedding as ours—with no more of company than the circumstances compelled—and I fancied that Lattimer, who broke a half-dozen engagements at the Embassy to stand up with me, winced a bit at the incongruity.

But Claudia was still something of a child. "I shouldn't feel that I'd been properly and really married," she explained, "if I'd worn a street gown."

Her mother came resplendent in a dress of royal purple satin, with a train long enough for a court presentation. Yes, yes, I shall have trouble with Claudia's mamma.

When Lattimer felicitated her upon her daughter's happiness—and Claudia certainly gave no sign of regretting the promise she had just made—the response was freezingly reminiscent.

"Well, I hope it's for the best," she said; "but what in the world does she see in him?"

OSMAN AGA

WHEN the sands of night are run,
And the toilers go their ways
At the earliest peer of sun,
Osman Aga kneels and prays.

When the streets by noon are burned,
And the roof-tops scorch and blaze,
With his brow toward Mecca turned,
Osman Aga kneels and prays.

At the purple shut of eve,
When the pilgrim khan-ward strays,
With the Faithful that believe,
Osman Aga kneels and prays.

But meanwhile this wag-beard gray
Cheats the poor with spurious wares,
So one scarce knows what to say
In regard to Aga's prayers!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE WHITE ECLAIR

By Guy Somerville

I SIBLEY SIBLEY, ESQUIRE, M. C., of New York City, in the County of Kings, gentleman, temporarily residing in Washington, D. C., tell this little tale as a specimen of the gentle art of foozling in high life.

Once upon a time there was a Greek Ambassador, who dwelt on K street, and was possessed of fine, fruity wines and an ambition. The wines he kept in cellars, which, as he was French by education, he delighted to call "*caves*," and we "mammoth caves," by reason of their area of square miles and because the surroundings were good for consumption; and his ambition was, briefly, to do away with the duty upon currants. Wherefore I dined there often, for in those days I was of the Ways and Means Committee, and a great Member in the sight of the Lord.

Also, it should here be noted that the name of the Ambassador was Papagyros, and that he was familiarly called Papa.

We sat, contented, warm, replete and stagsome, four of us men, by the Ambassador's log fire. There were Papa, present *ex officio*, and Prince Blatapski, the sculptor, who had recently made himself famous by modeling Mrs. Wilton Wichins's left foot for the Corcoran, and there were Jesse Ware, Washington's chief Devil Among the Lasses, and myself (alas! among the devils). We sat, as I have said before, stagsome, and smoked the cigarettes of Stamboul and sipped the wine of Patras.

"It is a well-known fact," observed the Ambassador, placidly, "that no one can kiss Lady Bunston."

That was the trouble about Papa. He was always enunciating those great truths of experimental psychology when you were expecting him to ask you if you would have another, just to keep him company; and they upset one's nerves.

But Ware merely nodded.

"Yes," said Ware. "Everyone with a good general education knows that."

"Especially," said I, thoughtlessly, "when Sir Wilfrid Bunston is looking."

The Ambassador deliberately thrust his hand into the Latakia and, taking his hookah, filled the bowl and lit. Then he said, "Do you think that—perhaps—when Sir Wilfrid is not looking—?"

"Isn't it stuffy in this room—just a trifle—don't you think?" I said. "Suppose we open that one. So much. Well, if you must have it, I did think that, perhaps, when Sir Wilfrid is not looking. But there! you know, Your Excellency, that I have not been long in Washington, and I live in Brooklyn."

Blatapski laughed a mighty, Polish laugh and drew something with his fork on the cloth. I looked at it, and it resembled the foot of Mrs. Wilton Wichins. Blatapski is very odd. He is a man of but one or two ideas.

The Ambassador puffed at his hookah reflectively. "How long do you think it would take?" said he at last. "A month—a year—or a decade? It must be while Sir Wilfrid is still on the turf." He spoke English very idiomatically for a Greek.

Then I knew he was going to bet, and I smiled at him with what I

fondly fancied was the smile of a Machiavelli. For I was very young in those days, and into my mind, while we sat and smoked, there had come a plan.

"A week," said I, "should probably be sufficient. A month would make it almost sure. Equipped with two months' time, it would be immoral for me to bet on it. It would be a certainty."

Then Jesse Ware spat furiously into the blazing logs, and I thought the Prince swore. But Papa merely puffed, disconsolately, at the hookah.

"Let us make it two months," he said, with craft. "Let us make it two months. If you—er—do, you shall have my order of Thermopylae, my horse Themistocles, my Persian cat Darius, and, if you wish her, my wife's French maid, Thérèse. She does your hair beautifully. If you lose——"

"Ah," said I, "that is a supposition which it is hardly necessary for us to make."

"Nevertheless," persisted Papa, "if you lose, I shall expect you *not* to stand in the way of free currants."

"My aunt has a place on the Rumson Road, near Seabright," said I. "It is big, and there are lots of trees, and the wines of the country are excellent. If I lose, I will go up there when the vote is taken on the tariff bill, and I will have appendicitis or something."

"Will you," said the Ambassador—and his voice was big with portent—"will you have another one?"

Then we filled up all around, and Ware and Blatapski swore themselves to secrecy, and Ware wished to know if he might hold the stakes. But the Ambassador declined. He was thinking, doubtless, of Thérèse.

Not long after this society was excited over an announcement, by my friend, Madame Wassini, of Iowa Circle, that on that day four weeks a charitable entertainment (tickets, \$5) would be given, under her auspices, at the Columbia Theatre, for the benefit of the Home for Aged and Decrepit Sculptors at Alexandria

(Egypt). Of this home la Wassini, as everyone knows, was one of the principal founders. The entertainment was to be of the ordinary kind, and many of the most exalted society men and women in the District were to be implicated in it. Mrs. Wilton Wichins was to sing (these were the days before the Feud), and the Portuguese Minister had agreed to recite, in Portuguese, a poem relating to love and death, supposed by many to be autobiographical. Blatapski, who was very strong, was to put up weights, and the Secretary of Agriculture was to lecture on "Dietary Studies of the Food of the Negro in New York City and Boston." But the *pièce de résistance* was to be the performance of "The White Eclair," a society drama in two acts, in which the title rôle (the White Eclair was the sobriquet of the heroine, on account of the supposed creaminess of her complexion) was to be taken by Lady Bunston, and the part of the principal man by Jesse Ware. It was noised abroad that "The White Eclair," which had been written by la Wassini expressly for the occasion, was a passionate sort of Italian play of the type which may properly be described as melodrama-comique, and that in the second act the heroine would wear a mask and flirt with the principal man in a conservatory (conservatory kindly loaned by Mrs. Whiter, of Oregon).

Of course, I attended the rehearsals, and allowed myself to be consulted by the Wassini from time to time. It chanced, strangely, that the evening of the performance was just two months later than the little *partie carrée* at the Greek Embassy, of which mention has already been made.

That night Lady Bunston was a dream, and as she sat in the wings while Blatapski and the Portuguese did their acts I felt a touch on my shoulder, and, turning, knew Papagayos.

"Sibley," he whispered, "permit me to offer my congratulations. It is now nine."

"Nine seven," said I. "Have you

Madame here, and the little Papagyroï?"

"Why wander from the subject?" said he, good humoredly. "You remember our little wager, do you not? Well, you have three hours. And it is magnificent!"

I turned slightly so that I could look over Lady Bunston's shoulder. She was studying her part. Following her finger I read a few lines by the hero and the stage direction, in italics: "*Crosses to the divan, R.*" I smiled.

"Certainly, it is magnificent," I whispered; "but it is not war."

"Of that I am not so sure," said Papagyro, though I thought the gaiety of his tone was forced. He would have been in a bad way without Thérèse.

"Now," said he, "if you could change places with Ware——"

"Yes," I answered, "if I could change places with Ware. The Dutch have beaten the Brazilians on the boundary dispute, I see. Was there anything new in the *Star*?"

"I don't care a rap," said he, "about the Brazilian boundary."

"No," said I. "You are only interested in currants. But, with proper training, you might rise to figs."

The Ambassador held up his hand. "Listen," he said; "I think it is your friend, the little Wassini. She has gone out in front, and I think she is saying something. Let us listen." And from before the curtain there came to us, as in a dream, the faint sound of Wassini's voice:

"——will be taken by Mr. Sibley, instead. Mr. Sibley was Mr. Ware's understudy, and there will be no hitch. Mr. Ware telegraphs that he is broken-hearted, but we must blame the doctor."

The Greek Ambassador steadied himself against the nearest scene. "As for this matter of Samoa," I said, "there can be no doubt, Your Excellency——"

"I beg your pardon," said he, weakly. "I really cannot discuss——er—Samoa. I think, if you will par-

don me, I will go back to my seat. I anticipate that the play will be exciting."

"Come out for a ride with me tomorrow afternoon and we will talk it over," said I. "If you like, I will have them saddle Themistocles for you. And, by the way, I have heard a shocking thing about Darius. I have heard that there are kittens."

"They shall follow Darius," he said, grimly, and left me.

There has rarely been such a dramatic success in Washington as the first act of "*The White Eclair*." Lady Bunston was marvelous, and as *Alonso*, the bold, bad man, I was not wholly without applause. It was but eleven o'clock, and I knew that in twenty minutes I should, in the language of the stage direction, "*cross to the divan, R.*" And Papagyro and Sir Wilfrid Bunston sat together and looked at me from the dress circle.

Then the curtain rose on the second act after an intermission of a quarter of an hour, and as I stood in the wings and saw Lady Bunston "enter" and take the centre of the stage I felt exalted and exultant. The note that she was to thrust into my hands, "with emotion," when we sat together on the divan, was tightly clasped in her hand. Her face was masked, but her long, Zaza hair was unmistakable. It had been the admiration and the despair of Washington for three seasons.

I crossed to the divan, R.

She sat there, mute, according to the scheme of the play, and thrust the letter into my hand, turning away her head. I played, of course, that I read the letter, and then I made my speech. It began: "Marion, this is madness; this cannot be," and ended: "I know, I know I am not worthy of you; I know that in my day I have been a gambler and a trickster and a rake, and all that, but you forgive me, child; you forgive me because I love you with all my strong, passionate, Italian nature; because, Marion, you are the only girl, and I cannot live, dear, without you."

And I added, quietly, so that Lady Bunston only could hear (for it was not on the menu): "Nor do I purpose to try." And I stooped and kissed her.

Then she made her speech, and there was a note in her voice that I had never heard before, and far, far back in the dress circle I saw Papagayos smiling. Sir Wilfrid had gone.

It dawned on me, slowly, as I looked at the note in my hand, while the curtain slowly fell and a modest pitter-patter of applause, much less pronounced than the salvos which had greeted the first act, bade us good-night. It dawned on me, and I looked for the heroine, but she was gone.

The note, instead of being a mere scrawl like many stage notes, began: "My dear Mr. Sibley," and was signed "O. B. B.," which is Ophelia Bradford, Lady Bunston. And thus it ran:

"*Do please* forgive me for sending my maid, Marie, to take my place in the second act, after the first one went so nicely. You did *beautifully*, Mr. Sibley, and in the second act I feel sure you will do *even better*. But you, *of course*, saw what a frightful cold I had, and I am trying to take care of it. I caught it about two months ago while dining with Mrs. Phillips, next door to the Greek Embassy. After dinner Mrs. Phillips would have us sit in the drawing-

room on the side toward the Embassy, *and the window was open all evening.*"

This paper I chewed, reflective, as the clock struck midnight and divers supers went about extinguishing lights. Papagayos is a courteous man, and did not call again behind the scenes. But I felt la Wassini's slim hand thrust into mine.

"Poor old boy," said la Wassini. "I didn't know it until too late. She went out without telling me."

I was silent.

"The girl did well," said la Wassini.

"Remarkably well," I said.

"You had no idea?" said she.

I turned on her fiercely.

"There is only one thing I want to know," I said. "*Where did she get the hair?*"

"The hair," replied la Wassini, tranquilly, "is Lady Bunston's."

I groaned.

"I have worshipped it for three years," said I.

"Don't tell," said la Wassini.

I walked slowly to the fatal divan, sat down upon it, and lit a cigarette fretfully.

"If only—" said I, and stopped.

"If only——?"

"If I had known about the—hair, I don't think I should have wanted to," said I.

"I'll tell Lady Bunston what you say," said la Wassini. "But I don't think it will do any good."



PLACING HIM

HE—Your father is going to propose me at his club.

SHE—Yes. He told me he thought it would be a good place for you to pass your evenings.



QUALMS

SHE—I don't know whether I would better go to the theatre alone with you or not.

HE—Why not? It is perfectly proper.

"I know; but you might ask me to supper afterward."